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# **RELIGIOUS BODIES AND THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY IN KUMBA**

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## List of Abbreviations

- AMFCO Association of Meme Female Councillors
- BHS Baptist High School
- BWIs Bretton Woods Institutions
- CBC Cameroon Baptist Convention
- CBCHS Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Service
- CSO Civil Society Organisation
- CBWU Cameroon Baptist Convention Women's Union
- CST Catholic Social Teachings
- CWA Catholic Women Association
- CWF Christian Women Fellowship
- FBO Faith Based Organisation
- FGMC The Full Gospel Mission Cameroon
- FUGOPAN Full Gospel Primary and Nursery School
- FUGOSEC Full Gospel Secondary School
- GESP Growth and Employment Strategy Paper
- HIPC Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
- IBRD International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- LDCs Less Developed Countries
- MDGs Millennium Development Goals
- NGO Non-governmental Organisation
- PCC Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
- PHS Presbyterian High School
- PRS Poverty Reduction Strategies
- PRSP Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
- SDG Sustainable Development Goals
- SDS Sustainable Development Goal
- WEEP Women's Education and Empowerment Programme

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to know the different engagement of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba looking at different social domains. In this light we seek to know how the presence of different religious bodies in the locality contribute in the fight against poverty. Growing in a society where religious diversity is fast growing in situations of complementarity and adversity, we took upon us to investigate not the dichotomy of religious in our said society, but to look at the potential these religious bodies could have in the fight against poverty. Upon this motivation we made our problem on this question: what are the different contributions of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba. In order to provide answers to the above problem, we used made use SWOT analytical method in a double phase. This was firstly in the phase of the research of information where we essentially made use of written sources. Here we essential looked at the strength, weakness, opportunities and threat of written sources. The second phase was during the analysis of data wherein we also took into account the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats of religious bodies in their action against poverty. This hence brought us to the main core of our research which is our findings.

From our finding we noticed from a general scope that religious bodies in Kumba are an important factor of development. This is because of their role as civil society organisation which gives them the legitimacy in the field of action of development, which is obviously that of poverty. Hence, they are eventually recognised by associative partner as a major actor in the action on poverty alleviation. It is in this sense that religious bodies in Kumba have moved from the purely spiritual mission to concretised action in the field of poverty alleviation. Their involvement is mirrored in the society by their actions in several social domains like: Education and Health as well economic actions like agriculture, empowerment and employment. The have a significant presence in the above domains as their impact in these domains are felt in double fold. However, after having a critical analysis of their role in poverty alleviation, it was evident that they have amongst other, the strength of the religious mission in the field. That notwithstanding the fundamental weakness of division involved in religion. But this does not hinders their mission because of the opportunities like the legal recognition and the trust of foreign partners. Religious bodies will be more effective in the fight against poverty if a better analysis of their strengths, weakness, opportunities and treats is made in the domain.

# CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Introduction

Africa and more precisely Cameroon today is at the verge of cultural hybridity. Africa's contact with other cultures has led to a continuous dynamic in several cultural issues of which the religious domain is non negligible. There has been constant development of several religious trends limited principally along the lines of Christianity, Islam culminating to the reducing influence of "Animism" or traditional African religions. This rising influence of imported religions, as is the case of Christianity is unquestionable. It has been estimated that the African continent has at least 4,000 new professions of faith are made every day. This makes it presently the most "Christian" continent in the world (Bediako 2000). Religious denominations have developed a complexity of practices in their worship towards their faith. They all seek the wellbeing of their faithful with the strict guidance of their established norms. This wellbeing also necessitates the physical and moral fitness of their faithful ought to ensure in every way.

Poverty is an old canker worm which has always eaten up the society where in people cannot provide their basic means of subsistence. The fight against poverty involves all endeavours geared towards providing the essentials of survival. It is true man does not live on bread alone but will need bread to survive. Religious bodies have come to understand that the search for righteousness necessitates a healthy body. And also it would be just if everyone could meet a societal equity. It is true the attainment of social equality is practically unrealistic. It is from this standpoint that religious bodies try to build a society where there is some social justice wherein everyone can meet the essential of survival. In this light, there is need of social equivalence where people can meet their basic needs. Religious bodies have become advocates in the fight against poverty. They are engaged in different activities in order to improve the living standards of their faithful.

In recent years in the world and more precisely in Africa, there is an active call for the fight against poverty. The fight against poverty (material poverty) still remains one of the Millennium Development Goals. The need for the contribution of all social partners is important if not vital. Religion is no panacea, but aspects of it can as well as motivate if development properly exploited. Religious people and institutions may be agents of advocacy, funding innovation, empowerment, social movements and services (Alkire, 2004). Religion as



a social partner can positively contribute to development when its usage consequentially empowers. However, a selfish interpretation of its principles can encourage aspects like conflict, division and encourage poverty (Adeyanju & Babalola, 2017).

In Cameroon today the active participation of different religious bodies in the fight against poverty is beyond questioning. The proliferation of the three principal religious trends in Cameroon today has not only touched the spiritual aspect of poverty but has been a pragmatic solution to the fight against poverty. Taking a specific example of the educational sector, the English speaking region of the country hold a rich heritage as concerns the establishment of western education with the aid of religious bodies. Unlike the French speaking part of Cameroon, the English speaking region during the mandatory and trusteeship period saw the involvement of religious bodies in the education. Both the British authority in the region role as concern education was to design the educational policy while the implementation was leaved in the hands of the religious bodies. It is in this light that the Christian missionaries were at the origin of Western educational schools. An example here is Saint Joseph's College Sasse, the first ever secondary school in the Anglophone part of Cameroon created since 1938.

Kumba is a cosmopolitan town with a constant growing population at the influence of diverse communities. These communities have gradually established their religion to the detriment of the traditional religion of the Bafaw people who are the principal indigenes of the area. From her ancestral traditional religion to imported religion, man's emancipation has been the epicentre of religious change. The evolution and the implantation of different religious bodies resulted from the contact of the indigenous population with different people. Kumba can now boast of a multicultural religious society with little or no threats of confrontation. The growing influence of religious movements in Kumba made us to question ourselves on what positive contribution it could bring to the locality. We hence embarked on the domain of the fight against poverty in the locality of Kumba while having a look at specific roles religious bodies could play.

Observing this form of continues growing religious domination in Kumba, we moved away from the negative effect it could have on the moral ethos of the people to look at the contributions it brings in the fight against poverty. It is obvious that the implantation of these different religious bodies accounts for several human aspect besides direct revenue generating issue. For example, churches will bring schools, orphanages, hospital and many other societal

forums geared towards the fight against poverty. That notwithstanding, these religious movements are sometimes judged controversial and their impact is sometimes questionable. Our main focus in this hand piece is to bring out the contribution of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba. Before a further analysis, it would be important here to recall the motivation behind our choice of topic.

## **1.2. Motivation**

Our inspiration to this study on religious bodies and the fight against poverty in Kumba come from several observation and exposure. Our motivation is drawn from two angles. These angles are the academic interest of such a topic and the societal relevance. Looking at the academic relevance, this topic opens a new perspective in theological studies on the possible role religious bodies have and could still have in the fight against poverty. It has long been thought that the role of religious bodies in the society was limited to the spiritual aspect. However, this view has to be reconsidered and given a possible academic consideration upon seeing the influence these bodies have in the society today.

Moreover, in the academic domain, our focus on the role of religious bodies in the fight against poverty is viewed from several perspectives. We embark on the locality of Kumba which is a multicultural society due to the contact and settlement of communities of different origins. The settlement of these different communities have brought in different cultural aspects of which religion is part. This has made the society of Kumba to witness fast growing influence of religious diversity. It is important to increase the literature of this society by basing on one aspect which is that of poverty. The likely role these bodies could have in the fight against this societal ill motivated our investigation in this hand piece.

Our motivation was not only academic but also due to our personal experience and the societal impact this work could have in our society. Looking at our zone of study Kumba, where we spent our early days, there is a proliferation of churches. Growing in this locality we were used to the influence of the Catholic and Presbyterian communities in terms of Christian communities. This has been fast changing in recent year with the advent of diversified Pentecostal confessional communities. The earlier established Catholic and the Presbyterian missions who had faced the traditional religion are now facing new comers from not only Islamic confession but also the “Pentacostants”. It is important to have another perception of this growing influence than only basing on the purely spiritual aspect these churches could

have. It is this perception we are trying to see based on the impact they could have in the domain of poverty.

It will not be irrelevant to recall here that religious bodies established during the European colonial days were aware of the fact they were heading to areas where it was not only necessary to preach the gospel. They had anticipated that they were going to meet people who live in deplorable conditions and so anticipated the means to improve the standards of living of their converts. This was possibly in the principle of offering something so as to gain the attention of the people who obviously already had a religious mind set. In this light, most of their installations in Africa in general and Cameroon especially were done with funds from charity. These funds were not taken from Africa but from the warm hearted foreigner. This situation has drastically changed with the advent of new dominions that often turn to collect lucrative funds from their often poor Christians. And the usages of these funds are often to the benefits of the top management of the churches. This made us to pose ourselves questions on the veracity of these Christian missions. In this paper we want to investigate to know if these lucrative funds collected from the parishioners were often invested by some in the fight against poverty. Evident today, as it has been before is the engagement of these religious bodies in the building of hospital, schools and many social amenities.

The town of Kumba was the booming heart of the Anglophone region of Cameroon. Wagons left Kumba for Douala full with cash crops. Since the economic recession in Cameroon, the population has been subjected to poverty where their cash crops cannot provide them with subsistent livelihood. Parents are unable to pay for their children's fees and this has led to school dropouts as well as several societal ill attached to poverty. In the search for other avenues on the fight against poverty we decided to undertake the study on the contribution of religious bodies in the fight against poverty. In order to carry out this research to it end we will need a good questioning.

### **1.3. Research Question and Sub Questions.**

Religion today is a unifying factor that can constructively gather people. Religion is the belief that overturning of events and the becoming of human depends on a supernatural being or beings. In this light a design ethics is suited to seek the favour of the being or beings. This is often designed under principles often followed with a certain rigour. The purpose of religion does not only evolves around the check of the spiritual wellbeing but also turns to look on the material wellbeing. Matthew Clarke informs us that about eighty per cent of the

world's population professes religious belief, thus suggesting that religious belief is a common human characteristic (M. Clarke, 2013, 13)

Religion is therefore a common practice amongst human beings that galvanises humans to both the positive and the negative end. This is done in a wide scope of divisions in the world that has constantly evolved and multiplied. Today we can talk of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Voodooism amongst others. The list is actually inexhaustible. In Cameroon, there are three main religious denominations namely: Christianity, Islam and traditional religions. Kumba is not indifferent of this listing. These religion dominations have created so many communities which illustrate different plan of actions so as to help out in their communities. It is in line with their first mission which is the spiritual wellbeing, they attach a moral wellbeing. The rhetoric we ask ourselves is to know if in the quest for this wellbeing is not miss appropriated in such a way that the outcome becomes frustrating to the population.

In this logic if religious bodies turn to be an incontestable social partner, they play a vital role as they do not only fight for the spiritual development. Religious bodies are actors of development and in consequently, fight against poverty. The vital role they play in the fight against poverty motivated our energy in this research. Research begins with a purpose and a question which determines the method used to answer it. With this in mind therefore, the main question that guided our thinking is “What do we want to find out?” or “What do we want to research on?” To begin with, our research will target individual persons, groups within religious bodies. The following questions will thus serve as a guide in my quest. The main question is:

- What is the contribution of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba?

From this main question several sub question were derived in order to articulate our research.

### **Sub questions**

- What are the different religious groups in Kumba?
- What are the engagements of these religious groups?
- What is their notion of poverty?
- What are the actions undertaken by these religious groups in the fight against poverty?
- What appreciation is made of the religious bodies in their engagement against poverty?

## **1.4. Scope of Study**

We are not going to do research on Christianity or Christian groups nor will we be looking at their religious ethos. In the same angle of reasoning, we are not carrying out a teachings on poverty. These two notions will be analysed in the theoretical section so as to set the base for our further analysis. Rather, we shall carryout investigations on the religious communities in order to get what people say and think concerning the praxis of faith at the grassroots, precisely the relationship between evangelization and development and the possible relationship that is found between religious organisation and poverty alleviation. In other words, we shall study their goals and activities, and find out what they think about the fight against poverty. This will be looking as their ethos if it judges their involvement in poverty alleviation or as a secular task or as a constituent of their mission. Summing to the above, we are therefore trying to analyse their achievements in the domain of poverty alleviation.

Limited by time, space and resources, it is impossible for us to investigate all the religious groups in Kumba. This difficulty elevates from the multiplicity of religious group which are often not identified by the states. For this reason, we choose to investigate on principally the Christian and the Muslim groups. This is because these two religious denominations have an effective presence and are well organised.

## **1.5. Research Design**

The research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. Five main research designs can be identified namely: the experimental, cross-sectional or survey design, longitudinal, case study and comparative designs. However, in this study, we are going to use the case study research design. This is not only because of the specificity of the topic but also because of the specificity of the chosen zone of study which is Kumba. Just as a recall, Kumba is not only zone of a hybrid population but also has a fast growing rate of confessions.

### **1.5.1. Case study**

Bryman observes that the case study design entails a detailed and intensive examination and analysis of a single case. This can be a single community, school, family, organisation, or person. We shall use the representative case, also called exemplifying case. This will help us to know the impact Christian groups and Islamic groups have on poverty alleviation on the specific area of Kumba (2012:66-67).

## **1.6. Research Method**

Research method answers the question of the procedure to answer the research question. Here we are talking of the technique, or strategy used to answer the main research question and sub questions. This involves the procedure employed from the collection of data and evidence, to the method of interpretation. This is summed up at the analysis of the interpretation thereafter. For example, data can be collected through the techniques of self-completion questionnaire or a structured interview schedule, or participant observation, in the case of a field participation. The research method purely depends on the type of source from which the work is build. It can be quantitative as well as qualitative. Our research methods consist of literature research and qualitative research, which are explained in the following paragraphs.

### **1.6.1. Qualitative Research Method**

The emphasis of this method is on words rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data. This method lays it emphasis on the value of the data collected than its quantification. It entails empirical or fieldwork studies and its main features include induction (drawing a conclusion from the particular to the general), observations and interpretations. This method has many ways or strategies of collecting data which are often referred to as tools or instruments.

### **1.6.2. Research Tool.**

Our main strategy of data collection and analysis will be based on the Strength Weakness Opportunities and Threat method of analysis generally called SWOT. In this light, given the fact that we are limited by space and time, we deem this method necessary. Through

this method, we are going to base our research principally on written information. We in this light sought relevant written the information. The written sources we took into account were both primary sources and secondary sources. In this sense, we analysed the written accounts of religious bodies, religious leaders as well as other observers. Looking at the secondary sources, we look at the previous analysis made in our domain or relative to our topic to draw our conclusions. The examination of these our source was not bias, we checked the relevant information and use the technic of confrontation to determine the relevance where necessary. The collection and treatment of information was done using the SWOT analysis.

### **1.6.2.1. SWOT ANALYSIS**

The SWOT analysis is a method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project, or business venture. SWOT analysis aims at identifying the key internal and external factors seen as important to achieving an objective. This method was first proposed by Albert S. Humphrey in the 1960s. This tool is useful now as it was then due to the fact that it can be used in two ways. This can be used to get together strategies for a “kick-off” or in a more serious strategic. This is used in business enterprise or project, and identifying the internal and external factors that favour and disfavour the achievement of that objective.

Though it is often used in businesses or products strategies, we chose to use it because of its advantages and relevant to our topic. Looking its advantages in our research context, the usage of the SWOT analysis provides a pre and post evaluation of our research problematic and relevance. It give not only the value of the topic which we exploited but opens speculation on a possible better implementation of the research proposal. In the context of our work, we are using this tool in two fold. This was in the collection of data and the analysis of data.

Looking at the first angle of usage, we made use of the SWOT in the context of data collection where we used written sources. In this light we viewed its angle of the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and treat that this source represented. We highlight here that in the course of the collection of information, written sources presented several strengths amongst which were: the primary nature of the sources written by contemporary actors, analysis of statistic. The primary natures of source general have the weakness of partiality of some authors. The author generally have the tendency of side taking. That notwithstanding, several opportunities like the openness of the terrain to future study. However, the written sources are

threatened by the multitude of source in the field like oral sources and iconographic sources. These other sources need to be exploited for a better analysis of the question.

In the phase of analysis of our data we made use of the SWOT analysis in the following manner. Firstly we established the strength of religious bodies in poverty alleviation. That is, the characteristics of the religious bodies that gives them an added advantage over other CSO in the fight against poverty in Kumba. Thereafter, we thought of the weaknesses. We here looked at the internal characteristics which put religious bodies at a disadvantage in relation to others in poverty alleviation in Kumba. We then look at the opportunities religious bodies could exploit to its advantage in their mission of poverty alleviation in Kumba. Then lastly, the elements of threat in the environment that could be potential elements of trouble for the project<sup>1</sup>.

We acknowledge the fact that the SWOT ties up to purely business circumstance and may not find it relevance in the social study. But we found it very interesting using this method here given the strength and weakness written document provided. Looking basically at the strength of the document we noticed that they had account of the situation as they were written by the contemporaries of the issue. However, they have the weakness of perceptive analysis.

### **1.6.3. Literature Research**

We admit the fact that we are not pioneers in this field of research. It is important to look at what social scientists and theological scholars have said in relation to this topic. This will help us to understand the concepts and refine our research, consequently proving its originality. A wide range of publications have already seen day before us in the domain of the relationship between religion and development or social welfare. Amongst them are various publications like book and articles. The lists of publications is inexhaustible but below are some we judged pertinent by the analysis put forward within.

Bruce Bradshaw, (1993), in his book *Bridging the Gap: Evangelism, Development and Shalom*. He talks about the gap between development and evangelism, and Education: liberating and empowering people. Analysing the potential relationship these three factors could have, he demonstrated the benefit that evangelisation could bring to development. Hence, a clear relationship is established with us by his analysis of the positive role evangelization could contribute in development or a side-line to poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com), modified to our context



Chris Sugden (2000), in the book *Gospel, Culture and Transformation* analysis in chapters 1 and 3 crucial issues with reference to our topic. He puts ahead the fact that the gospel can influence development because of its informative character in relation to mission and development. Specific areas and themes of interest are the reflection of development, religious and secular approaches to development, spiritual evaluation of development, holistic mission, and mission as transformation. By so doing, he looks at the mind-set of religious as concerns issues like secular development.

Jeffrey Haynes (2007) in his publication *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation?* Haynes highlights the sometime controversial role of religion in development, and especially the rise of faith-based organisations. The fundamental of his analysis resolve in the idea that the relationships between religion and development could led to a positive output if the basics are not put into conflict. This could otherwise be negative or less profitable when principles are misappropriated.

Articles have also been published with reference to our topic. Amongst them is Adeyanju, James and Babalola Emmanuel (2017), “The Gospel and the Impact of Poverty on the Practice of Ideal Christianity in Nigeria” in *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*. These co-author analyse the growth of Christianity in Nigeria, in a context of daily multiplication of churches and Christian communities and their negative impact of poverty on the practice of Christianity.

Okechukwu Odinaka Ajaegbu (2012), in the article “Religion and National Development in Nigeria” in *American Academic and Scholarly Research Journal* examines the influence of religion on the development of Nigeria. His analysis ties down to the fact that religions could have a positive relationship with development if there is moderation in religious beliefs and practices. Extremity on beliefs and practices could under development and poverty like wise.

M. Norcia and A. Rissotto (2013), in the article “How Religious Faith Affects Beliefs on Poverty: A Study in Italy” in *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* analyse the causality of poverty with reference to religious beliefs in the Italian society. The authors seek to examine the perception of religious beliefs on the notion of poverty. Thereby looking on the issue of poverty been a relative state of mind or the biblica positive value of poor belonging to the kingdom of heaven.

Filipe Campante and David Yanagizawa-Drott, (2013) in the article “Does Religion Affect Economic Growth and Happiness? Evidence from Ramadan” analysed the effect of

Ramadam on productivity. They concluded that religious practices can affect labour supply choices in ways that have negative implications for economic performance, but that nevertheless increase subjective well-being among followers can as well be archived.

Jaco Beyers, (2014), in 'The effect of religion on poverty' tries to establish the effect the former could have on the latter. Beyer concludes that religion obviously has an ethical effect on poverty. He further says that religion plays the role of promoting the willingness to generosity and consequently help societal restoration which goes a long way to alleviate poverty. He stress on the moral aspect religion has on the society which could a stabilising factor to poverty.

Last but not the least is Nkwawir Jude Fanwong, (2015), in his master's thesis "Small Christian Communities and Development in Cameroon" looks at the contributive role the small Christian communities play in development in Cameroon. He concludes with the fact that small Christian communities have a role to play in development because they do not only give a religious stamina in their communities but are also active developmental social partners.

The various publications provided a wide scope of theoretical framework for our analytical discussion and also enrich our understanding of the subject matter. We appreciate these hand pieces carried out by these pioneer author which help us trigger our inspiration to this topic. Their hand pieces were written with the use of different research tool. This has positively helped in the development of our work. This bring the originality of our work which come with a different main purpose.

Our main pertinence here is to see that role the religious bodies have in the fight against poverty in Kumba. The pertinence of this subject can be seen from two angles, notably intellectual and the societal. Intellectually, it envisages and enriches the already established literature and foster the role the religious bodies could have in fight against poverty. Socially, Kumba's sociology faced with the constant inflow of different communities in a situation of growing religious societies, gives a potential zone for this studies. We therefore decided to look at the particular social aspect of poverty and the role religious society could have in it alleviation.

After having collected data through the above mentioned techniques, we shall then assess, evaluate, and analyse our findings in the analysis and discussion chapter. Our logic will be discussed in the visions of our research questions, development theories, the Millennium Development Goals, and some of the issues highlighted in the literature review.

This will enable us to formulate our own theory. Then in the conclusion we shall draw together the threads and assess how well the research question has been answered by our inquiry.

## **1.7. Concepts**

We cannot proceed in this topic without putting in place some basic concepts that call our concern and the angle through which we anticipate tackling them. Amongst these concepts are; religion, religious bodies, poverty and poverty alleviation.

### **1.7.1. Religion**

Religion is a system of social coherence commonly understood as a group of beliefs or attitudes concerning an object, person, unseen or imaginary being, or system of thought considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine or highest truth, and the moral codes, practices, values, institutions, and rituals associated with such belief or system of thought (O. Ajaegbu 2012). This is summarised by Sundermeier as collective human response to the awareness of the transcendental (1999, 17). This awareness manifested in a framework where specific theological doctrines and practices are advocated and pursued. These theological doctrines and practices are sometimes documented or can be generally passed on to generation as culture. We cannot talk of religion with talking of a community reason why its manifestation is usually amongst a community of like-minded believers.

The Latin origin of the word of religion which is *Religio* provides us with two distinctive root etymologies. Firstly, is the word *relegere*, from *legere*, means to bring together, to harvest or to gather. Secondly is *religare*, from *ligare* which means to tie or to bind together. The first meaning recognizes the religious foundations of any social group that is gathered together. The second indicates the disciplines or morality that is necessary for controlling and regulating human beings (O. Ajaegbu 2012). From these basic etymologies, it is clear that religion provides us with two basic functions which are gathering in a specific moral code. This gathering is manifested in several ways wherein different means of worship are demonstrated. It is this form of gathering that is generally called religious bodies.

### **1.7.2. Religious Bodies**

The gathering and ethical functions of religions are its basics which is manifested in different societies by multitude of ways. Religious bodies or religious organisations are groupings of religious individuals that have a variety of different goals and purposes. Churches themselves are the first type of religious organisation<sup>1</sup>. The Church not referring to the place of worship but to the confession of faith, whether traditional or modern, have structures just like any other organisation. These other organisations exist to help the church itself accomplish its spiritual as well as moral goals in the society. In a nutshell religious organisation are bodies founded on religious ethos which have different driving goals. Different religious confession can embody organisation but their factor of reunion and their goal will be based on religion.

The town of Kumba hold three principal confession or faith regroup in communities, namely: Christians, Muslims and Traditionalists. These major divisions have further division based on their ethos. Our focus is the role these faith based groups or religiously oriented bodies play in the fight against poverty. The core issue is that many religious bodies connect human material and spiritual existence. Many religious bodies have an opinion on how the poor should be treated or viewed. This creates the opportunity to compare different religious positions on poverty as well as identify the role they play and the potential they could have in matters.

### **1.7.3. Poverty.**

A distinctive definition of poverty cannot be made because it is a creature with many heads and several tails. It is hence importance to hold to our contextual meaning of poverty which turns around deprivation of essential needs for survival. Also important is the fact that poverty can be relative in a society as well as it can turned as a state of mind. It is hence important to demarcate our contextual line of poverty and limit to the state of deprivation. Geremek defines poverty as ‘the point at which the survival of the individual and of the family becomes threatened’ (B. Geremek, 1994. 3). Poverty can be distinctively classified into absolute poverty and relative poverty. The former is our main focus and it is on it that clear emphasis should be made.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.encyclopedia.com>

David Gordon (2005:4) perceives poverty as the inability of getting choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. He further stresses that it means the lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. This can be explained further on the sense that it is not only lacking food but also be found in a situation where essential social commodities are perceived as luxury by the poor. This extensive definition continues to list all possible forms of deprivation amongst which are: food, education, medical treatment, self-provision, non-access to credit, powerlessness, violence, poor sanitation and many other forms. Poverty can be seen in several folds but our main concern turns around the fight against deprivation of means of subsistence and social involvement. The fight against deprivation is the core that leads us to poverty alleviation.

#### **1.7.4. Poverty Line**

The definition of poverty could be related to several aspects based on the milieu is applied. Poverty can be cultural as well as it can be relative in the society. It is with reference to this that specialists have tried to relate the situation of deprivation with reference to the society. In 1963 Mollie Orshansky created the terminology of poverty line (Ted K. Bradshaw, 2006, 4). This was done at the United States Department of Agriculture based on the authors estimate on what a family could spend on an adequate three time meal which was far from lavish diet. The poverty line or “poverty threshold” is the smallest amount of money a person or a family needs to live on. This line is not the same in every country and is often compared to the standards of living.

#### **1.7.5. Poverty Alleviation**

Poverty alleviation otherwise known as poverty reduction is an ancient concept that has always been part of every societal project. This issue is recently of growing mediatisation because of the constant growing gap between the rich and the poor. This has made the fight against poverty a call to all social partners. Poverty alleviation is the strategic use of tools such as education, economic development, health and income redistribution by the government and other organisations to improve the livelihood of the poor (Jide Ibietan and Felix Chidozie, 2014. 4). Poverty alleviation is not only vision in the short term provision of survival but a long term empowerment which will lead to an end result. This is not only a government based

goal but also involves other organisations amongst which are religious organisations which are CSO.

Having an ethical function in the society, religious bodies have taken upon poverty alleviation to introduce their own methods. This is critically envisaged in their ethos as is the case of the Christians. They are called upon to fight against deprivation as prescribed by their biblical text...“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink...” Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25). Religious bodies in the fight against poverty do not only take upon them the moral role but also put into practice their vision on poverty alleviation. The fight against poverty by religious bodies involves two principal zone of action notably providing expertise to empowering and charity. They are these various actions undertaken by religious associations that will be our essential point of interest in our subsequent lines.

## **1.8. Thesis layout and chapter summary**

The analysis put forward to justify our topic was schedule in seven chapter. The first chapter is the General Introduction which give an inside into our reason for choices and a guide to our analysis. Chapter two covers the Background of our study. In this chapter we try to situate our zone of study in its geo-political and sociological sphere. The third chapter looks into the Religious bodies and the State of Poverty in Kumba. In this chapter, we bring out the various religious confessions operation in the zone of Kumba and situate the context of poverty which the population faces. Chapter four covers the Perception of Engagement in Poverty Alleviation by the different Religious bodies and Poverty Alleviation Programmes. Just as indicated by its title, we analysed the philosophy of the different religious bodies as concerns the fight against poverty. And in a second phase we look at the different poverty alleviation schemes. Chapter five present the Findings on poverty alleviation strategies and the role played by religious bodies in Kumba. Here we present a view of the global strategies to poverty alleviation and concerntrating on Cameroon, we sought out its own strategies as a Third World country. We hence looked at the supposed role of religious bodies in the fight against poverty demonstrated in different sectors. Chapter six brings a critical analysis of the role played by religious bodies in the fight against poverty. Here we look at the strenght, weakness, opportunities and threats of religous bodies in the fight against poverty. Our analysis are summoned by a General Conclusion.

## CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

It is important for us to present the area of study from a larger perspective. In this regards, we are situating Kumba with in the large geographic context of Cameroon under the spectrum from the conception of the nation to the little metropolitan site of our study. Our viosu in this chapter is to have an inside of the socio-cultural, economic and political situation of the area so that a better understanding can be made our focus. We are hereby looking at the population pulling nature of the Geography of Kumba which had as consequence the development of a heterogeneous population with the passing of time.

### **2.1. History of Kumba, a metropolitan town in Cameroon.**

We cannot talk of Kumba without situating her in her geopolitical coordinate which is Cameroon. Cameroon is an African country which territorially is as old as the world but its constituents to a country only began as from the 1884 with German colonisation (D. Abwa, 2010. 52). This date marked the constitution of the modern territory of Cameroon. The German colonisation was quickly brought to an end after a thirty two year of reign during which they (Germans) struggled to constitute and consolidate their reign in the territory Kamerun. The Germans had not yet enjoyed the fruits of their investment when the Frist World War began in Europe in July 1914 and took less than no time to be expanded in the Germans colonies. This was soon the case of Kamerun. A joint French and English attack was launched against the Germans in Kamerun in 1916 and by 1916 the Franco-English coalition had already defeated the Germans. The French and the British were not only motivated by the World War context but profited from their hitherto sandwiching colonial possession to attacked Kamerun so that they could use it as post war bargain amongst other issue. The consequence of this defeat was the partition of Kamerun between the British and the French at the ratio 1:4 respectively.

This territorial division marked a great change in the becoming of these territories. France took the lion's share which was the eastern part of Kamerun called and named it administratively *Le Cameroun Francais*, while Britain took responsibility over the Western part composed of British Northern and Southern Cameroons. The British parts of Cameroon

were integrated in Nigerian regional administration<sup>1</sup>. From 1916 – 1945 these territories were administered by France and Britain as mandated territories under the auspices of the League of Nations. In a continuum of the process of administration from 1945 – 1960 (1961) these partitioned territories were still administered by the same powers as Trust Territories under the auspices of the United Nations trusteeship but this time the powers had to gradually led them to independence. It will not be importuned to assert that the creation of modern Cameroon came about by German colonisation and was later fashioned by later tiers administration by the British and the French.

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 1960, *Le Cameron Francais* gained independence as the Republic of Cameroon (La Republique du Cameroun, the French name). The British parts of Cameroon in the same spirit requested their own independence. The United Nation then issued a plebiscite to determine the means of acquisition of independence for the two territories. British Southern Cameroon on February 11th 1961 under the supervision of the United Nations voted for reunification (233,571 against 97,741) to merge with the Republic of Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Consequently, on 1st October 1961 Southern Cameroon gained automatic independence and unification. They consequentially became the State of West Cameroon by the constitution of a federal constitution which they voted. On May 20<sup>th</sup> 1972, after the Referendum, a new constitution replaced the federation one with a unitary state called the United Republic of Cameroon<sup>2</sup>. This was later modified in 1984 when it became the Republic of Cameroon by a Presidential Decree. Thus, Cameroon has a triple German, French and Anglo-Saxon colonial legacy. It is good to know that, since independence, Cameroon was ruled by the former late president Ahmadou Ahidjo, until November 4, 1982, when he unexpectedly, resigned and handed over his powers to his constitutional heir, the Prime Minister Paul Biya. And he (Paul Biya) has been in power in his capacity as president of Cameroon since 1982 to date.

Looking at Kumba, territorially it had existed since but its naming came from the settlement of the Bafaw people in the area. The Bafaw is the principal of the two ethnic groups of the area. The great Esambe Ngoe from the Mbo plains settled at a place called Mashui found near Kokobuma, one of the 10 Bafaw villages. One of his sons, a fearless hunter named Midiki Uke "Bokeng" went hunting and founded Kumba around 1640. He was discovered under an umbrella tree called "ekomba" in Bafaw by a Portuguese explorer. The

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<sup>1</sup> Cameroon Embassy in the Netherlands available on <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/cameroon.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Cameroon Embassy in the Netherlands, available in <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/cameroon.htm> and <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cm.html>



naming of Kumba arises from a misunderstanding between the Portuguese and Midiki. When the Portuguese asked what his names were, he thought the explorer asked what was the name of the tree was. He said "ekomba" and the explorer wrote down "Kumba". This confusion was hence kept and the name of the town today remains Kumba<sup>1</sup>. The neighbouring Bakundu ethnic group had also live the while maintaining a practically pacific relationship with the Bafaws. The beginning of the effective occupation of the Kumba land by the Germans was as from 1888 marked and marked a new phase in the sociology of Kumba (T. Musima 2014).

The Germans noticed the rich nature of the soil in Kumba which was favourable for the development of agriculture. This was essentially agriculture for commercial purpose with the vision of supplying their home markets. The German there decided to invest in plantation agriculture in Kumba on crops mostly cocoa and palm nuts after they had carried out investigations in neighbouring Victoria (T. Musima 2014, 175). The sociology of this area felt the consequence of this new form of economy which was very different from the trade by barter that had dominated the precolonial days.

The plantations that were opened as consequence of German were mostly owned by Germans expatriates and their companies. In order to fuel the smooth functioning of these plantations they needed labour that could contain the fast growing plantations and not rely only on the unreliable Bafaw and Bakundu people. It was believed at that epoch that the indigenes of the region were not only spare by population but put on a reluctant attitude to work. This led to a massive "importation" of human labour from the neighbouring grassfiled regions of the actual North West and West Regions (W. Gam Nkwi 2017, 141). The long rung impact of this population influx is that Kumba developed a hybrid population. Consequently, it remains one of the rare places in Cameroon where aborigines are a minority (Nkemngong Nkengasong 2016, 10).

This economic importance of Kumba to Germans was evident with the creation of the only actual existing railway line in the Anglophone part of Cameroon from Mbanga. This was obviously for the evacuation of primary products from the zone. The continuous growth of Kumba to a cosmopolitan town was influenced by the British Mandate and Trusteeship from 1916 to 1961. This period saw the continues growing influx of grassfielders into the region but also the growing influence of Nigerians as from the 1950s. They had first entered the region as plantation workers but later became an influential foreign nationality in the region and even dominated commerce. Today the Nigerian community most specially the Igbo

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<sup>1</sup> [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/10555/CM](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/10555/CM)

control a greater percentage of the Kumba main market<sup>1</sup>. This has gone a long way to influence the sociology of the area.

Kumba today which is locally called “K Town” or “K” is a cosmopolitan town that can boast of a heterogeneous population that has grown due to the influence of influx of other people with the passage of time. Today almost every ethnic group in Cameroon can identify herself in Kumba and this has led to a transformation of its indigenous language to the adoption of a common lingua-franca called Pidgin English (Nkemngong Nkengasong 2016, 11). This population influx has influenced sociology of the zone of which religion is not exclude. The original identity of Kumba is almost threatened to religious identity. The population has tends to identify herself with reference to religious practices. This gives us a certain legitimacy to verify the contribution of these religious organisations in the fight against poverty. But before we engage on this it is essential to recall the Geography of Kumba.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cameroonweb.com/CameroonHomePage/geography/kumba.php](http://www.cameroonweb.com/CameroonHomePage/geography/kumba.php)

## 2.2. Geography of Kumba

Kumba, also spelled Koumba, town is largest town of the South West Region of Cameroon. It is situated at about 65 km the northwest of Douala. It has as geographic coordinates  $4^{\circ}38'$  North and  $9^{\circ}27'$  East<sup>1</sup>. The representation of Kumba can be seen in the map below.

Figure 1: Map of Kumba

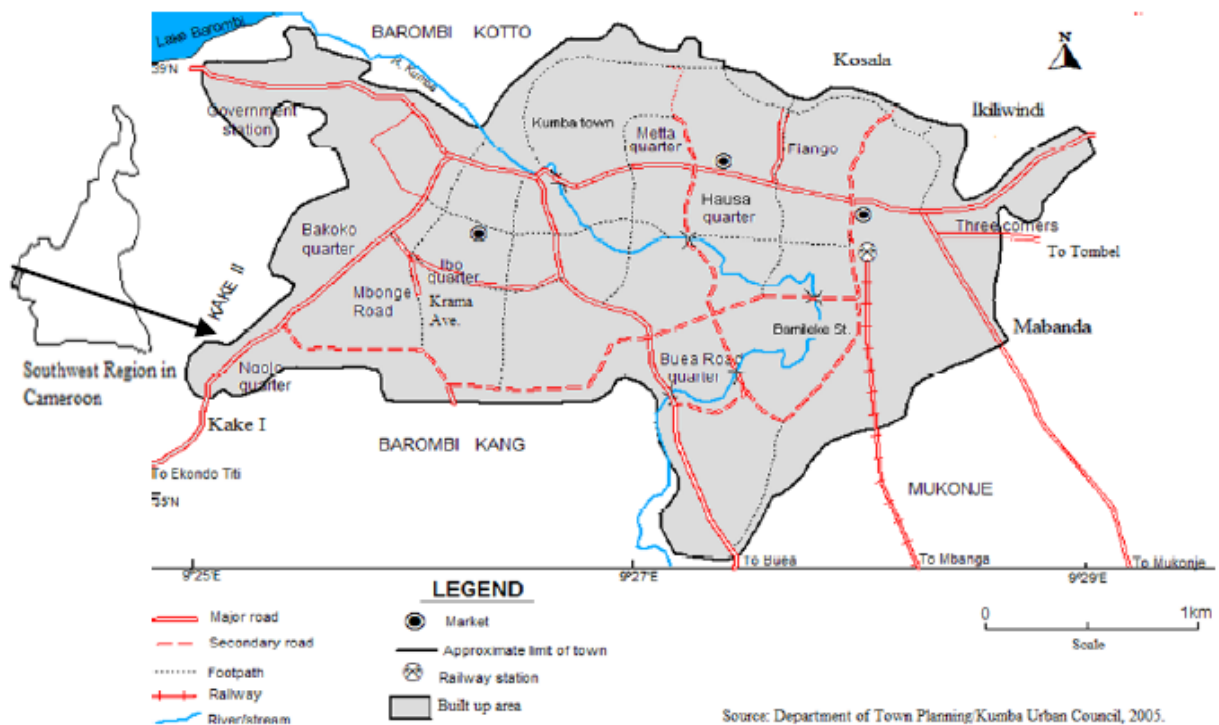


Figure 1. The map of Kumba (Department of Town Planning/KUC, 2005).

Source: Department of Town Planning Kumba Council.

Kumba is bordered by the Subdivision of Konye in the North West, Tombel in the North East, Mbonge in the South West, Muyuka in the South and in the East by Nkongsamba. Its covers a territory estimated to 11,431km<sup>22</sup>. Climatically, it is located in the tropical rain forest region and this makes it have tropical vegetation and a tropical climate. The seasonal situation of region is estimated to have a period of nine months of rainy season and just three months of dry season.

<sup>1</sup> [www.britannica.com/place/Kumba](http://www.britannica.com/place/Kumba)

<sup>2</sup> [www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/diocese/kumb2.htm](http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/diocese/kumb2.htm)

The economy of Kumba is greatly influenced by its vegetation. This influences the growth and the commercialisation of oil palms, rubber, tea, bananas, plantains, and cocoa (the major export crop). Its food-processing, construction, and lumber industries use agricultural and forest products from the area. The town has a government hospital as well as several health centres and a medical research centre. The surrounding region is noted for its many waterfalls and Lake Barombi Mbo, a crater lake several miles to the west. The strategic position and potentials of Kumba makes her an important regional transportation centre, connected by railway to Douala and by roads to Buea (Southwards), Mamfe (Northwards), Bafang (Northeast), and Douala<sup>1</sup>. These ecological and economical potentials make the region to register a heterogeneous population of about 144,268 based on the last 2005 census (BEUCREP Census 2005). It is also important to have an overview of the population fraction of Kumba so as to better understand the growing influence religion plays in this zone.

### **2.3. The People of Kumba**

In our early discussion we made clear the heterogeneous nature of the population of Kumba due to the influence of the influx of different people at different times. These imported populations have established themselves and their culture as well as their way of worship in such a way that they feel at home in the area. In spite of the cordial relationship the different people live, there is some conflicting issue arising amongst these communities on the issue of autochthone. However, conflict is not our main focus. Our main focus here is to do an attempt of the various people involved in the Kumba by identifying some major communities. The reason for looking at the multiplicity of the people in Kumba can be seen on a double fold. Firstly by identifying them, we establish the role they have to play in religious activities in the area. Secondly, we demonstrated their participation in the socio-economy which has an impact on the situation of poverty in the area which we are analysing.

Talking about indigenes or the autochthone of Kumba, we will talk of the Bafaw, the principal occupant and the Bakundu. The Bafaw are the most dominant of the indigene people of Kumba. The Bafaw speak the *Lifaw*, a language similar to Duala. Just as a recall of the above mentioned, the history of the Bafaws can be traced from the great Esambe Ngoe, a migrant hunter from the Mbo plains. He settled at a place called Mashui found near Kokobuma, one of the 10 Bafaw villages. The other villages of the Bafaw are: Kombone

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<sup>1</sup> [www.britannica.com/place/Kumba](http://www.britannica.com/place/Kumba)

Bafaw, Dikomi, Kurume, Bolo, Ikiliwindi, Mambanda, Kumba, Dieka and Njanga. All these villages are presently under the Paramount leadership of HRH Fon Victor Esemisongo Mukete<sup>1</sup>.

The other indigenous people of Kumba are the Bakundu. They have spread out of the Kumba Subdivision to neighbouring divisions. Bakundu land is located in the south-eastern region of the present Meme Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. It cut across three subdivisions, namely: Kumba1, Konye and Mbonge (T. Musima 174). They are to an extent considered as a minority as compared to the indigenous people of the Kumba region. Their language is the Oroko. The Bakundu people are ruled by their paramount Chief Tata Itoe Benjamin Motanga. Due to its cosmopolitan nature, the Bafaw and the Bakundu now form just a percentage of the general population of the city, and have lost many aspects of their culture<sup>2</sup>. There is the influx of other people in Kumba and this has seriously influenced the culture and most especial the religion which is our concern.

Looking at the imported population of Kumba, the Bamileke is a group of people we should not neglect. The historic implantation of the Bamileke in the region can be drawn when thousands of Bamileke people crossed the borders from French administered Cameroon to the British Southern Cameroons. These were both protest and economic migrants. The protest migrants were those considered as the marquisard who protested against the French colonial rule. The majority of both the economic and protest migrants had as destinations, in the Southern Cameroons, the Kumba Division because of the fertility of the soils and the presence of plantations that were earlier set up by the Germans (J. L. Nfi, 2016, 2). This phenomenon persisted until date. The indigenes of Kumba have tend to became tenants in their own lands because of the growing economic power of the Bamileke in the area. Conflict arouses between the Bamileke community and the indigenes consider them as invaders and predators. The indigenes continue to slumber in poverty powerlessly observing the invaders grow economically (J. L. Nfi, 2016, 2).

Two other important people that are not to be neglected are the Hausa and the Nigerian communities. The influx of Nigerians came as from the 1950s due to colonial tie of the Anglophone Cameroon with Nigeria. They have dominated trade in the markets and they are the highest expatriate population in Kumba (especially the Igbos). The Hausa influx in the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/10555/CM](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/10555/CM)

<sup>2</sup> <http://cameroonnewsagency.com/bafaw-tribe-faced-existential-threat-risk-extinction-kumba/>

region was purely commercial in order to trade their cattle. But they have today found a comfort zone in the area and even a section (quarter) is named after them. This is the Hausa Quarter.

The impact of this influx of different population groups can be felt in the sociology of the area. But we will look at one aspect of the sociological impact of this influx which is religion. From our local observation, Kumba is one of the most notorious towns which has a certain crime wave accredited to the increasing poverty. It is also a town where in a road tour you will not spend a day with coming across a preacher or come across a worship centre in every street you take. The outburst of the different religious domination from animism to Christianity and Islam is due to the influx and contact of different people. The white had introduced Christianity basically with Baptist and the Basel Mission. The expansion of Christianity in Kumba has been partly due to the influx of Nigerians with more of Pentecostal Missions. The Hausa influx contributed in the implantation of Islam in the region.

This constant growth of religious denominations calls our attention to the role religion can play in the fight against poverty in Kumba. In this sense, we are looking for the pragmatic actions put in place by these religious bodies in poverty alleviation. But before we look into that, it is important for us to look at the different religious bodies present in Kumba.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RELIGIOUS BODIES AND THE PRESENT STATE OF POVERTY IN KUMBA**

In the locality of Kumba several religious bodies can be identified amongst which are a broad distinction of Christian, Islamic and Traditional religions. This broad division can further be divided into different denominations. Poverty in sub Saharan Africa has been constantly growing. In the locality of Kumba, this issue has worsen since the 1990 with the beginning of the economic crisis that stroke Cameroon and had as major consequence the fall in the prices of primary exports. The main objective of this chapter will be to identify the various religious bodies acting in Kumba and the level of poverty.

### **3.1. Religious Bodies in Kumba**

Taking a look at the general perspective, according to the 2005 census which is the most recent available statistics, approximately 69% of Cameroonians are Christians, 21% are Muslims, 5.5% are practitioners of African traditional religions, 3.5% do not associate with any particular religious movement and the other 1% practice other religions. The Christian population is divided between the Roman Catholics (38.4% of the total population), Protestants (26%), orthodox (0.5%) and other Christian denominations (4%). The Roman Catholic Church is not only the largest Christian denomination in the country but is also the only religious denomination that embraces both the eight Francophone and two Anglophone regions of the country. The Cameroonian legislation guarantee freedom in the domain of worship and religion primarily on article 15of its constitution.

The largest non-christian community is the Muslims who are concentrated in the three northern regions and amongst the Bamoun ethnic group of the West region. On the other hand, traditional African religions are practised in rural areas throughout the country but these are hardly practised openly in the cities because of the numerous varieties and their intrinsically local character. The exact number of those practising these African traditional religions is quite difficult to estimate because many of them have also accepted and practise certain tenets of either Christianity or Islam.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the traditional beliefs and practices have simply been incorporated into their faith. It is however, the way the different religious

groups have interacted with the state particularly in bringing about the political changes that have taken place in Cameroon in the last two decades that have raised interesting issues.

### **3.1.1. Christian Religious Bodies**

Christian religious bodies in Cameroon include the Protestants, Catholics and the Evangelicals often called the Pentecostals. All of these Christian religious bodies hold the belief that Jesus Christ is unique and he is the one and only route to salvation. They believe God acted through him, giving him the world not just in the Holy Book, but also in the whole life. A human life that consists of the experience of suffering in self-sacrifice, and that which expressed the loving purpose that the one creator has for every other human life (Bowker, 2002). These religious groups began their evangelical mission in Kumba from the pre-colonial to colonial and finally to the post independent period. The Protestants were the first to be established in Cameroon in a general and precisely in Kumba in particular. Later on came the Catholics and recently the Pentecostals.

#### **3.1.1.1. Protestants**

The Protestants in Cameroon include the Baptists, Orthodox, and the Presbyterians (R. Leinyuy Kahnyuy, 2017, 33). The core of their doctrine hold that the protestants is the response to God's mercy, which emphasized that, the individual must be converted into a deeply felt experience that resulted in a profoundly personal religion owing everything to the new Testament, nothing to any government, and very little to any organisation larger than a congregation of believers. (Bowker, 2002, 254). The history of the Protestant movement and churches emerged from the Reformation movements that began within the Roman Catholic Church as from the 12th to the 16th centuries (A. Feldtkeller<sup>1</sup>). The Protestant principle centred on the fact that believers should have independent access to the Bible. The bible should not only be at the keeping of the clerics but should be widely spread so that everyone can access, read and deduce God's preaching. The significant implication for this concept was the education and the establishment of writing systems for languages of previously non-literate cultures or diverging from the uniquely Latin culture of their period. The impact of the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-and-the-world/mission/protestant-mission/andreas-feldtkeller-protestant-mission/view>



protestant movement was not only felt on the propagation of many churches but also with an expansion of the translation of the bible and clerical material to several languages.

The founders and leaders grow and develop intellectual systems like that of the Catholic Church. Their heritage from the Roman Catholic made them to continuously incorporate practices carried out in the later. These Protestants grow as majority of them splits from the Roman Catholic Church. The Christian religious life in Cameroon and specifically in Kumba began with the Protestants following the arrival of the Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society in 1841. This was later suited by the London Baptist Missionary Society and the Bassel Mission that was in collaboration with the American Presbyterian Mission. The protestants churches that exist in Cameroon today are the Baptist, Presbyterians, and the Orthodox but the Orthodox are only in one region of the Country that is, in the Adamawa region. Looking at Kumba, our interest will be centred on the Baptists and the Presbyterians as religious bodies.

The Presbyterian Church in Kumba is part of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). The PCC in Cameroon is made up of 33 congregations of the 1,306 congregation in the entire national territory. They effectuate the second representation in term of the Christian church in Kumba after the Catholics. In terms of implantation and investment, the Presbyterian Church is the second after the Catholics. Their investment is not only visible at their worship house but at their involvement in several domains. This makes them a real social partner and their engagement can be visible in several domains notably health, education and people empowerment. Their material engagement is justified with the realisation of presently 26 nursery, 125 primary and 15 secondary schools, as well as a teachers' college in the National territory. The church runs three general hospitals, two specialised hospitals and 17 health care centres. The PCC also provides job opportunities to young Cameroonians through the materialisation of the fore mention schemes. They are also owners of four business enterprises that offer professional training for young people. They also run a programme for the rural population in which they advises farmers on location and organises courses at the agricultural education centre of which Kumba. This aspect is a great beneficiary to the local population especially those of Kumba who depend solely on agriculture as means of subsistence<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mission-21.org/en/projects-and-partners/partner/cameroon/>

Looking at about the Baptist Church in Kumba, it is part of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC). The CBC was formed in 1954 and came under the management of Cameroonians after the management was ceded by the European (J.P. Messina and V. Slageran Jaap, 2005, 69). The Baptist of the C.B.C is active only in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. Their membership population is estimated to 75,000 in Cameroon. Their social engagement can be materialised in their broad health and education coverage of the North and South West Regions of Cameroon. Their presence in the health domain even though only in the two English speaking regions in Cameroon impacts on the national territory. Patients leave the other region to come to their hospital because of the quality health services. In these two regions, they run 5 Hospitals and 24 health districts. They also place emphasis on education and people empowerment from which Kumba obviously benefits.

### **3.1.1.2. Catholics**

The Catholic Church is the oldest and the most established religious body worldwide. The Catholic Church was not the first in terms of arrival in Cameroon but now has a national coverage in all the regions of the country. It is found in all the regions of the country and has the most established infrastructures. The development of the church has faced many challenges in previous eras. Its fashioning had constantly been reshaped from its creation with Apostle Peter to present day. By so doing seeing its experience through centuries as a divine revelation alongside the Bible. They certainly believe that God acts in history. The Catholics take the long view of things, which are being slow to change. As the Catholic Church developed over the centuries, certain basic divisions set in as the Roman Empire had been divided into Eastern and Western administrative units under the emperor Diocletian, with Constantinople also known as Byzantium and Rome as dual capital. As a result, the Christian churches which at the origin was Roman from its foundation, in these two zones began to move down separate parts. Eventually, crystallizing into two major divisions of the Orthodox Catholicism of the east and Roman Catholicism in the west. (Allen Jr.2014. 49-53). Today, the conventional estimate is that, there are 2.3 billion Christians in the world and roughly a third of the overall human population of that number slightly more than half (1.2 billion) are Roman Catholics, 300 million are Orthodox, and 700 million are Protestants as well as Pentecostal. (Allen Jr.2014. 55).

Our principal focus here is drawn towards the Roman Catholics which is under the panoply of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). Just as a recall, the RCC hold the largest number of Christian population nationwide. In the locality of Kumba, they are the most established religious group covering an estimated population of 206,000 making 36.5% of the population. Their significant presence in the locality is demonstrated by their enormous infrastructural domination. They have 16 parishes run by 41 priests (36 diocesan, 5 religious), 49 lay religious (5 brothers, 44 sisters), 23 seminarians<sup>1</sup>. This effective presence is also justified by the wide range of social activities. They represent a serious social partner wherein they own a number of schools, hospitals, orphanages, Leprosarium. These are some examples of their field of action in the social domain in Kumba which is amplified by their involvement in poverty alleviation schemes. The RCC presents a forum for employment but also alternatives of empowerment and mind building.

### **3.1.1. 3. Pentecostals**

The Pentecostals grow very fast as they draw followers from other religions because of their miracles, prosperity gospel, tackling what affects the lives of people such as poverty and ill health, speaking in tongues within the New Testament. This movement draws its first occurrence on the day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Pentecostal movement all started when this phenomenon was experienced (Bowker 2002,p.255). Pentecostals believe their doctrines are not new but a commitment to the 'full gospel'. That is they are re-emphasizing the old doctrines as found in the Bible. Nichol (1996) outlines the old doctrines of the Pentecostal in the principles below:

- a) The biblical emphasis on salvation and justification by faith
- b) The doctrine of the second coming of Christ
- c) The stress on divine healing
- d) The doctrine of the Holy Spirit that empowers a Christian to live victoriously and to witness effectively and whose gift enables a believer to perform the supernatural.

Pentecostals strongly believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurred on the day of Pentecost amongst the early disciples. They believe that it was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples that made them speak in tongues on the day of Pentecost. This outpouring was not only for that day and was not limited only to the early disciples. This

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/diocese/kumb2.htm>

was to continue for the posterity and spread worldwide. Pentecostals often have a reject on the society because they believe the society is full with the ill of corrupt, wicked, hostile and hopelessly lost. Their sceptic attitude toward the society made people to have a negative suspicion on them. People used to suspect that Pentecostals practice and believe everything was odd and erroneous. (Synan 1997. 187-188). In Cameroon today, there exist so many Pentecostal churches with various believes and teachings. Their churches are pushing like mush room and are fast growing. Famous amongst them are: the Winners chapel, Full Gospel Mission, Church of Christ, Christ Embassy, True church of God, Omega Fire Ministry, Jesus Church and many more.

Kumba serves as the birthplace and headquarters of most of the Pentecostal churches in the country. It harbours many of these churches, amongst which there are The Apostolic Church, Full Gospel, Church of Christ, The Church of God, The True Church of God, The Church of God of Prophecy, The Deeper Life Bible Church, The Celestial Church of Christ, Assembly of God, Africa Bible Church, Evangelistic Centre, and the Millennial Church. The gregarious attitude of the indigenious inhabitants, the freedom of worship that prevails in the area and the alarming Nigerian immigrant population make this town a good breeding ground for Pentecostalism. The establishment of most of these Churches was done by Nigerian immigrants or by Cameroonians who have lived in the USA or Nigeria. Kumba is a rising home for Pentecostals due to the rising Nigerian influence in the region and also the poverty of the society that has pushed many to search for miracles in these centres (R. Akoko Mbe, 2002, 365). The Pentecostals easily seduce the people of Kumba due to the miraculous message they preach to a people who have almost lost hope in their government and see them as the only source of survival.

### **3.1.2. Islamic Religious body**

Islam is a religion based on the teachings of the Holy Koran. It adheres roughly 24% of the population of Cameroon. Muslim in Cameroon are principally located in the north of the country but are also represented in their small numbers in all the divisions of the national territory. Islam remains a major reuniting and socialising factor as it does not only stand as the second most practised religion in Cameroon but has impacted in the localities where it preaches. The social impact it has is manifested in the message of peace and tolerance preached in the virtue of Allah. It is also a socialising factor of reuniting its converted.

Islam in Kumba is an imported factor that has fastly imposed itself in the terrain as the second most practised religion after Christianity. We had less written information about the practised of this faith in the region. But from our findings, we noticed that it was came second in religious practices after Christianity. It regroups a certain community that share their commonness in faith. Though they are several brotherhood in the Islamic society, they share a certain solidarity of the commonness of faith. Their divisive factor mostly come from their points of origin in the country as we can notice the Mbororo and the Hausa. However, they have put in place a social atmosphere where an entire location known as the Hausa Quarter can be identified as site of its converts. Islam in Kumba act as a real social partner it provides infrastructure for education and other forum for its converts<sup>1</sup>.

### **3.1.3. Traditional Religious bodies**

Traditional Religious bodies in Cameroon and precisely in Kumba base their practise on culture that has continuously been modified with the passing of time. Their practices are not codified or based on text but based on their cultural heritage practised as tradition. Generally they are monotheists but the practise of several divinities are toward the glory of the supreme divinity is recognised (J.P. Messina and V. Slageran Jaap, 2005, 15). Generally, these traditions are oral rather than scriptural which it includes, belief in a supreme creature, belief in spirit, veneration of ancestors, use of magic, and traditional medicines. The base of their practise lays in the notion of empathy. Traditional religion in Kumba today is of reducing influence on the people of Kumba. People have drifted away from it and are more focused on the imported religions. Otherwise, people still keep some value of the religion while subscribed to other religions. This makes it to be a lesser social partner.

## **3.2. The state of Poverty in Kumba**

In the introductory part of this work we discussed the notion of poverty on the ground of deprivation. We want to slide away from all the other notions of poverty and concentrate only on that of deprivation. This inclination will be our centre of focus and we in this part going to discuss the socio-economy of the zone of Kumba that has favoured the growth of poverty. Remember we made mention of the fact that the level of poverty in the zone was not

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<sup>1</sup> [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/10555/CM](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/10555/CM)

limited to lack of the essential of survival but was extended to the lack of means of participation and social involvement. In the following line our focus will be looking at the sociology of Kumba that has promoted the growth of poverty in the region.

### **3.2.1. Socio-economy of Kumba**

A better view of the society of Kumba can only be best had by looking at the economy of the region and its human class stratification. Kumba as we earlier said is a metropolitan town inhabited by people of different origin. The heterogeneous nature of the society has gradually imposed a minority class of local bourgeoisie alongside a majority of impoverished people who can barely provide for their basic means of subsistence and societal participation. The situation of class stratification in Kumba cannot be compared to the medieval where the class distinction was institutionalised. This class stratification is better comprehended when related to the economy of the region.

In the line above we had talk of the nature of the economy of Kumba that is dominated by agriculture and commercial activities. We are going to stress here on the role this has played in shaping the livelihood of the people of Kumba. Talking about agricultural activities in Kumba, there are essentially based on commercial agriculture with the production of products like cocoa and palm nuts. This activity is at a larger scale handled by foreigners (North Westerners and Bamilekes). Very few autochthones have been involved in the development of this activity. The indigenes of the zone have practically liquidated nearly all their parcels of lands to foreigners and are left with almost nothing (Joseph L. Nfi, 2016, 5). Just some few indigenous families like the Muketes can boast of having made a fortune from commercial agriculture. Talking about commerce, it is left in the care of the Bamilekes and Nigerians (Igbos).

This economic situation has help to fashion the society of Kumba. The society has been gradually stratified between a handful of rich people who have made fortune in commercial agriculture and commerce opposed to a majority of poor people who are gradually going down the poverty trend. We cannot talk of medieval class stratification in Kumba of Lords and serfdom but we can describe a society where a handful of rich control the economy and the masses are suffering. The case of Kumba is a little particular in that this new class of rich people are the ones responsible for providing a livelihood to the poor. This

situation is worsen when the wages offered to the poor are too low that they cannot sustain their basic needs and can barely cover their life line while waiting for another period. An automatic societal stratification is imposed where area like Soba's street is reserved for the rich and Mabanda for the poor. This is an image of the socio-economy of Kumba.

### **3.2.2. The preponderance of Poverty in Kumba**

The problem of poverty and its preponderance in Kumba is questionable. The potentials of Kumba do not permit her to face the actual situation of poverty where it will prove as a negative indicator. But ironically, Kumba is faced with such a situation of poverty that is mirrored through several phases. We earlier said in our introductory lines that poverty was the situation of deprivation of opportunities to essential social subsistence. The situation in the town of Kumba can be better perceived from this angle where about 33% of the population are found below the poverty line and cannot provide for sustainable education, medical treatment, self-provision, credit. This puts the poor a situation where they are powerlessness, forced to face violence, and cannot meet good situation of sanitation<sup>1</sup>.

The poverty in Kumba emanates from several factors amongst which are the agrarian nature of the economy, the poor actions and reactions of the government and attitudes of the often lack of duty consciousness of the people (S. B. Oumar, M.C. Sama, 2017, 119). These factors are seriously interwoven and cannot be independently explained. Looking at the first factor which is the nature of the economy of the region. We had earlier stressed on the agrarian nature of the economy of Kumba. Just as reminder the economy of the region is that of commercial agriculture. This is based on the production of primary farm products for exports like cocoa and palm nuts. A fall in the prices of these products in the world market has several consequences that go to the reduction of the producers' incomes and obvious knock-on effect on the local population, thereby leading to the persistent poverty. This has always been the case in Kumba where the price level of cocoa has affected the lifestyle and expenditure rate of the people.

Another important circumstance that has depreciated the lifestyle of the residents of Kumba is the economic crisis of the early 90s which had wounds that are still gradually scaring. The economic crisis left just few untouched and has retarded economic progress

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<sup>1</sup> [www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?c=cm&v=69](http://www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?c=cm&v=69)

significantly. This crisis led the drastic fall in the prices of primary product which were at the core of the economy of Kumba. Although predictable and indeed foreseen, the crisis seems to have taken the government by surprise, since very little preparation was made to counter it. Consequently, little was done to avert or prepare for it. The crisis exacerbated poverty, misery, unemployment, fear, doubt and uncertainty. This did not only lead to social problems but simultaneously financial problems arose where banks were facing a lot of liquidity problems. This made some to be liquidated.

The consequence on the state was that it faced difficulties in paying employees and in honouring its obligations to the private sector. Public and private institutions lay off personnel, and continue to do so, while this situation worsened as the recruitment of new workers has been drastically reduced. The salaries of workers have been slashed several times, and this has inflicted innumerable hardships on them and their families, with a sharp increase in social insecurity (R. Akoko Mbe, 2002, 360). Armed banditry is now commonplace and a certain degree of terror reigns in Kumba.

Moreover, the actions and reactions of the government are often put in question as having causal effect on poverty. Several angles of analysis can be viewed to the failure of government actions and reactions. We are going take examples by looking at the inappropriate educational policy, bureaucracy in administration and corruption. Talking about education, the government has placed a lot of emphasis on general education. This has as negative effect that does not takes into account the specificity of the region. Perhaps, if more concern was given toward to vocational training or education by looking at the specificity of each zone. In Kumba the target should have obviously been agricultural training so as to meet the demands of the agrarian economy of the region.

Talking about the bureaucratic nature of the government, the highly centralised system of administration contributes to delays in decision making on issues affecting the welfare of peripheral spheres to the central power (S. B. Oumar, M.C. Sama, 2017, 119). This make it in such a way that policy implementation in the region takes longer time than necessary. This lengthy expand in policy implementation has made policy implementation make the control mechanism to be less effective and corrupt. Consequently, good policies are conceived but less field implementation is met. It often not strange to administrative policies that a lot of bureaucracy kills administration. This system in Cameroon has not only encourage



embezzlement but has promoted misappropriation. All these have a knock-on effect on poverty.

The fight against poverty in Kumba cannot be solely left in the hands of the government. There is need for participation of other social partners amongst which religious bodies. Their role stands not only because they have a moral obligation, but also because they have the legitimacy as CSO and they are active development partner. However, the perceptions of these different bodies as concern their view to poverty and their angle of involvement is necessary to look. This will help us to better understand their engagement.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE PERCEPTION OF ENGAGEMENT IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION BY DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS BODIES AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES**

In our earlier analysis in chapter three we made the state of affairs of the different religious denominations that are present in Kumba. We made an identification of the different stake holders of religious affairs in Kumba. It is essential for us to make an analysis of the vision of their engagements as concerns poverty alleviation. In this part our concerned will be to have an insight of the vision that is sustained by the various religious bodies that we identified with regards to poverty one a first note. Secondly we will be looking at the general measures to fight against poverty. It is important to have this vision because it will help us to better understand the various angles of engagement undertaken by these religious bodies in the fight against poverty. And we will better see if their perception of poverty and poverty alleviation is in line with measure to fight against poverty.

### **4.1. Christian Religious bodies and their vision of engagement in poverty alleviation**

We identified different Christian bodies earlier acting in Kumba amongst which were the RCC, PCC CBC and the Pentecostals. These different bodies share different perception of engagement on poverty alleviation. We are going to look at their different perception to see if this engagement has as objective the fight against poverty.

#### **4.1.1. The Catholic Church's vision of poverty and their engagement in its alleviation**

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) is our mains concern when it comes to the Catholic Church. This is the oldest Christian religious body which throughout the passing of time has continuously proven its social engage despite the challenges of rival institutions. The RCC stands as a numerical institutional domination in the Cameroon and even in Kumba. Their vision of engagement in poverty alleviation and their doctrine is inculcated by the Catholic preaching. This is better explained in light by the Catholic Social Teachings (CST).

The consideration of poverty in Catholic social teaching begins with the fundamental that each person is both sacred and social, created in God's image, and destined to share in the goods of the earth as part of a community of justice and mercy. The CST bases her arguments on the several biblical stand of which the deuteronomical laws, the covenant, and the prophets' teaching wherein special issues are mentioned of the poor and their privileged place in the community (Rev. Fred Kammer, S.J, 2009).

In the RCC's doctrine a specific group of people are consider as socially vulnerable. The classification has four type of people to whom the society and especially Christians are indebted to. These include: widows, orphans, strangers, and the poor. The in this sense the Catechism recommends that a preferential treatment should be accorded to them. Love should be shown on the part of the Church to those oppressed by poverty. The RCC's doctrine see poverty to be connected to powerlessness and non-participation in society. Following this logic, the actions towards the alleviation of poverty should be centred towards these concerns. The teachings on poverty alleviation have grown from simple charity with assistance of a meal or shelter to encompass an array of necessary responses in several domains. The fight against poverty according to this doctrine should go from short term provision of means of subsistence to long term empowerment and societal participation. The great line of the poverty alleviation by the RCC is listed below:

- Advocacy for social and economic change
- Empowerment of individuals and groups so that people can be "artisans of their own destiny"
- Political and economic participation
- micro-enterprise loans
- Granting and importance to "property" for the poor in multiple senses of land and capital
- Providing education and technological know-how in several domains.
- Provision of health facilities.

The above point build us the mind-set of RCC's philosophy when it comes to poverty alleviation. It is towards the above plan of action that her involvement is seen in Kumba and by so doing making her one of the most active in the field.

#### **4.1.2. The Presbyterian Church's vision on poverty and their engagement in its alleviation**

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon plays an important role in poverty alleviation. To better understand this role, it will be good for us to have an inside of what is governing their philosophy on poverty and their engagement in poverty alleviation. Thereafter, it will be easier to decipher their role alleviation of poverty. The core mission of the PCC is to "Proclaim the Good News of God through Jesus Christ in word and action". This mission of proclamation of this Good News includes several issues such as preaching the word, teaching, healing and liberating the people of God from sin. The conception of the PCC clearly states that the fight against poverty can only be better perceived from the angle of the poor. This means you will not what poverty is all about if you do not have a taste of it. From this stand point the philosophy beholding the PCC's engagement is brought out.

The philosophy of the PCC's engagement in the fight against poverty is explained by Dr. Brian Fikkert at three different levels (Patricia E. Clawson). The first level of engagement can be described as the "relief". This can be tern a short term solution to poverty alleviation. This is necessary when there is crisis and necessitates an immediate assistance for example providing food for the poor. A critical example here is when there is a food crisis and provision is made to cut the hunger. The second level can be described as the "rehabilitation". This stage of poverty alleviation seeks to help the poor to fend for themselves. The poor is called here to be an actor toward the fight by participating in the process. The third level is "development". This is different from the first two in that it is a long term solution to poverty where it involves empowerment.

In line with this the PCC's objective of making God's message of salvation more concrete to God's people and fighting poverty amongst the poorest of the poor, the PCC is involved in the management of several projects under its control. The successes of these project are evident in the society today. And this has brought positive changes in the lives of many underprivileged and poor in society of which the society of Kumba is part. In this light, the PCC has set up a special body called the Developmental Secretariat. Headed by a Secretary, the Development Secretariat conceives, designs and supervises projects intended to liberate God's people from the ill of poverty. This is undertaken by fighting illiteracy, hunger, sickness, suppression and violence<sup>1</sup>. This has led to the materialisation of several schooling

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pcc.cm/spage.php?id=29>

facilities, empowerment programmes and health facilities. All these in the hope of ameliorating the lives of the poor of which Kumba has obviously benefited from.

#### **4.1.3. The Baptist Church's vision on poverty and their engagement in its alleviation**

The Baptist Church which is our concern is under the mission of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC). The CBC got her independence from the North American Baptist Conference in 1954. The management of the CBC was now leaved in the hands of Cameroonians. The philosophy of their engagement can be drawn from their cradle which stands as follows: "Growing in Grace, Strengthening One Another in Faith". In this light they seek to work together in obedience to the Great Commandment and the Great Commision of Jesus Christ. This is done through several actions of worship, preaching, teaching, healing, and social ministries<sup>1</sup>. Just as a recall, the CBC is part of the protestant mission which the PCC is part. This make them to share similarities in some social conception. Their philosophy of engagement in poverty alleviation does not much different from that of the PCC. They give more importance to a long term solution to alleviation of poverty. The summit of their solution is empowerment which is considered as a more long lasting solution. That notwithstanding, they hold a record for their health services in the English speaking regions of Cameroon which is present in the zone of Kumba.

In the context of their social engagement, the fight against poverty in Cameroon is a priority. This priority is carried out by the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services which has established partnership with other international donors. This body does not only deal with health but seek to empower the poor. The provision of education is also a means of fighting against poverty which the CBC does not neglect.

#### **4.1.4. The Pentecostal Churches' vision on poverty and their engagement in its alleviation**

Pentecostalism is of recent development in Christianity worldwide and more precisely in Cameroon. Its doctrine can be described as "full gospel". It is places more emphasis on the old doctrine of the Bible. Pentecostals believe strongly in the baptism of the Holy Spirit that

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cbchealthservices.org/HBCN/CBC/index.html>

occurred on the day of Pentecost amongst the early disciples. They believe that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples that made them speak in tongues on the day of Pentecost was not only for that day and only to the early disciples. The propagation of the Pentecostal trend in Cameroon occurred in two phases. The first phase saw the early Pentecostals trend which was animated the presence of the Apostolic Church and the Full Gospel Mission established in 1949 and 1960 respectively. The second then occurred as an issue of post economic crisis churches. This period actually saw the flourishing of church as we can see nowadays. These two trends from the differences in the period in which they occurred seriously differ in their messages. We are not going to look at their doctrines but we are stressing on their economic message as concerns deprivation.

The Pentecostal propose two religious doctrinal alternatives to overcome deprivation or poverty. The first is the implementation of the doctrine of the biblical teaching. According to the teaching, low value is to be accord to wealth which is considered meaningless. This doctrine emphasises on the fact that Jesus came for the poor and by so doing blessed were the poor and the meek for their compensation was the kingdom of heaven. This doctrine was made popular amongst the first Pentecostals. They did not give much importance to wealth and material wellbeing. But the economic crisis came to change their prospect of thinking bringing in a second conception stressed upon by the second trends or new Pentecostals (R. Akoko Mbe, 2002, 370).

The second trend have a different lecture of the situation as their vision looks to implementing a doctrine which considers prosperity and spiritual life important and can be acquired. They emphasis on the fact that “Jesus came to bring abundant life, prosperity and money is not evil and by so doing all believers have to work hard because no one is supposed to suffer. The new Pentecostals adopt a method by which they believe they can have possession of whatever they want, a belief which is based on prosperity theology. This theology teaches that the spiritual and material fortunes of a ‘believer’ are dependent on faith and on how much he gives spiritually and materially to God or his representatives and by so doing emphasis on seed sowing and tithes (Marshall 1992: 2-32; Gifford 1991: 10-20). It is no longer the thinking of “it will be difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven...” Pentecostal churches have become secular and have taken up new ventures of investment in the zeal to alleviate poverty even though they are often much criticised in their judgement of values. Their managements often seem like grabbing from the poor for their personal societal elevation.

#### **4.1.4. The Islamic vision on poverty and their engagement in its alleviation**

The manifestation of the Islamic faith passes through the propagation of the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. In its social teachings, Islam aims at providing every opportunity for good living at both the individual and social levels. Its aim is to shape both individual as well as society as a whole in the way that the kingdom of *Allah* may be established on earth and that peace, contentment and wellbeing may fill the world. Islam is one of the religions that bases its unique concept of man's place (wellbeing) in the universe (living and earthly and celestial paradise) (Abdul G. Ismail, 2010, 3). Wellbeing in Islam is determined by five aspects notably: religion, physical self, intellect or knowledge, offspring and wealth. Poverty in Islam can only be better understood when related to the basic necessity of wealth or possession.

Islam associates the concept of poverty to the *nisab*. This is the one of the two prerequisite for a Muslim to pay the *zadah*. The *Nisab* is the minimum quantum of good or wealth that must be possessed before that good or wealth is subjected to the *zadah* (obligatory alms for the destitute and poor). Islam subjects a category of people who have reached a certain status to remain grateful towards the poor. Islam tries to grade the poor. In this context, it defines two categories of poor people, namely needy and destitute. The needy are those who do not possess the necessities in life. These ones possess the minimum to survive but are limited by their social participation. The second group refers to those whose level of reach is half of that of the poor which are the destitute. They cannot make a life line for survival. Islam previews that more attention should be given to the destitute or the so called hard core poor. This distinction between the poor and the destitute has been clearly defined for the development of solutions to the alleviation of poverty as envisioned by Islam (Abdul G. Ismail, 2010, 3).

Islam proposes three poverty alleviation measures. First is the positive measures which include income growth, functional distribution of income, and equal opportunities to all. By so doing, Islam encourages effort (work) for the acquisition of wealth. Second, are the preventive measures. These measures seek to control of the ownership of wealth in a situation which encourages malpractices in the economies and business. These misconducts may eventually lead to income concentration and encourage poverty since it favours detrimental exploitation. The third measure is that of compulsory transfer payment. An important means preview is the compulsory redistribution of income through several alms giving types proposed by Islam (Abdul Hasan M. Sadeq, 1997).

Charity stands to be an important virtue of the Islamic society where social responsibility towards each other is promoted. The positive measures are expected to lead to high level income and its equitable distribution, the preventive measures are expected to limit the concentration of wealth, while the corrective measures are meant for correcting imbalances in the distribution of income and wealth, and to upgrade economic conditions of the worse-off population in the society.

## **4.2. Measures to fight against poverty**

Poverty alleviation remains one of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Cameroon under the coordination of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has drawn several Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). Cameroon regularly submits the evolution of this plan to the IMF which carries out control missions to see the effective implementation of these plans. The plan aims at introducing micro and macro-economic strategies that will induce sustainable development and alongside eliminate or reduce poverty. Poverty is not limited to the lack of income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood. It goes beyond sustainable livelihood to involuntary non participation in the society. It is manifested in several ways by situations of hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. The classical solution to poverty should be inclusive. Economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality.

Short term measure to poverty only bring limited measure where it is just reduce for a short while and constantly resurfaces. Long term strategies to alleviate poverty have to take into consideration in the above. These include introducing macro and micro-economic projects to foster development. There are many approaches to poverty alleviation in the long runs and all of them gear towards the inclusion of the poor. Some of these approaches are: Economic Growth Approach, Basic Needs Approach, Rural Development Approach, and Target Approach (Mustapha Muktar, 2011)



#### **4.2.1. Economic Growth Approach**

This approach looks at the specificity of the economy so as to know the appropriate strategy to implement. In less industrially developed countries, given the low labour absorption capacity of the industrial sector, broad based economic growth should be encouraged. This should focus on capital formation as it relates to capital stock, and human capital. Human capital formation has to do with education, training, health, nutrition and the housing needs of labour. This is obvious from the fact that investment in these facets of human capital improves the quality of labour and thus its productivity. Thus it ensures that the growth that place can takes care of poverty, the share of human capital as a source of growth in output has to be accorded the rightful place.

#### **4.2.2. Basic Needs Approach**

This calls for the provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, water, sanitation, health care, basic education, transportation etc. This measure has disadvantages when not followed suite by proper control. Unless there is proper targeting, this approach may not directly impact on poverty because of their inherent disadvantage in terms of political power and the ability to influence the choice and location of government programmes and projects.

#### **4.2.3. Rural Development Approach**

This approach sees the rural sector as a unique sector in terms of poverty reduction. This approach is mostly used in developing counties and should be encouraged there. This is because majority of the poor in developing countries live is in the sector of agriculture. In addition, the level of paid employment in this sector is very low. This means that, traditional measures of alleviating poverty may not easily work in the rural sector without radical changes in the assets ownership structure, credit structure, etc. Emphasis in this approach to development has focused on the Integrated Approach to rural development. This approach recognizes that poverty is multi – dimensional and therefore, requires a multi – pronged approach. The approach aims at the provision of basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, safe drinking water, education, health care, employment and income generating opportunities to the rural dwellers in general and the poor in particular.

#### **4.2.4. Target Approach**

This approach favours directing poverty alleviation programmes within specific groups in the country. It includes such programmes as Social Safety Nets, Micro Credits, and Youth funding. These approaches seek to get directly to the causal issues than to consequence.

In a nutshell, a sustainable means to alleviate poverty takes into account the participation of every one. This involves a collective effort which will need the people, the government and the civil society where each constituent of the society will have a role to play. The role of the government is to create a good atmosphere by providing the legal framework, infrastructure wherein the population will feel its need to get engage. The civil society comes to complement the action of the government in specific areas. The religion bodies are acting in the field of the civil society as concerns the fight against poverty in Kumba.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES AND ROLE PLAYED BY RELIGIOUS BODIES IN KUMBA**

We could not conclude our finding without having a critical look on the global poverty alleviation strategies and having a specific look on Cameroon. It is in this vision that the context of poverty alleviation in Kumba and the critical role played by religious bodies can be viewed. This section present our findings based on SWOT research tool which we made use of. This section present the global poverty alleviation strategies after which we shall have a specific look in the context of Cameroon. Thereafter, have a look at the role played by religious bodies in poverty alleviation.

### **5.1. Global poverty alleviation strategies**

Poverty alleviation remains one of the main Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that is targeted by all government and International organisations. The MDGs have been levied on all countries to see into its attainment. Poverty alleviation is at the centre of all governmental policies. This situation is more critical in Less Developed Countries (LDCs). This is mostly the case of Sub-Saharan countries. It is true that poverty cannot be completely eradicated but it can reduce to a considerable level. This is if the process is accompanied with sustainable development in the areas of where planed action is taken. Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) have become a popular governance tool in contemporary policy-making in developed and developing countries. PRS are formulated at multiple levels. These policies can take many forms, and often promote several targets and corresponding interventions<sup>1</sup>. That notwithstanding poverty still remain an imposing factor in the world as the gap between the rich and the poor is constantly increasing.

Several approaches have been taken by different economies in the world globally so as to cut down poverty. In a corporative tendency, the European platform against poverty and social exclusion is one of seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. A number of actions can be identified for implementation at

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.onpovertyreduction.ca/poverty-reduction-strategies-revealed/poverty-reduction-strategies-around-the-world/>

the European level. These actions were designed to help European Union (EU) countries reach the headline target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020. In the United Kingdom for example, the strategy called ‘*A new approach to child poverty: tackling the causes of disadvantage and transforming families’ lives*’ was designed as a targeted approach. This represents the United Kingdom’s first Child Poverty Strategy. It was released in 2011 by the Conservative Party. The strategy fulfils the obligation under the Child Poverty Act enacted by the Labour party in 2010. It is a part of the governments’ overall objective of ending child poverty by 2020<sup>1</sup>.

The case of the Less Developed Countries passes through specialised programmes generally called Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) funded by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs). The BWIs is made up of the World Bank also known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They launched the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) initiative in 1999 to improve the planning, implementation, and monitoring of public or government actions geared toward reducing poverty and sustainable development. The initiative centres on promoting the PRS process in each country were designed in context of each country and were expected to be country-driven, results-focused, long-term, comprehensive, and partnership-oriented towards the alleviation of poverty.

Low-income borrowing countries were required to complete a PRS paper, or Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), for continued access to World Bank and Fund concessional lending. This had to Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC) for the debt relief. For a country to be considered valid for debt relief scheme within the HIPC initiative, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank required a PRSP. The PRSPs amongst other were also meant to serve as the framework for assistance which could be exploited by external partners, including the World Bank. This paper gave great lines of the country’s vision and facilitated target action for funding by BWIs and other partners. The evaluation reviewed the initiative’s effective progress on the realisation on field. This assessed the effectiveness of the World Bank’s support (World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, 2004).

The PRS stressed on the fact that bank should emphasis on improving the country’s processes for planning, implementing, and monitoring public actions geared toward poverty reduction. It should encourage countries to establish goals and benchmarks in these areas that

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.onpovertyreduction.ca/poverty-reduction-strategies-revealed/poverty-reduction-strategies-around-the-world/>

are appropriate to the country's circumstances and within current country's capacity to monitor and use. That notwithstanding, It should place less emphasis on completion of documents. The Bank should provide transparent, comprehensive, and candid feedback to countries on their PRS processes and progress so as to develop a review procedure more supportive of ownership and more effectively linked to decisions about the Bank's program (World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, 2004).

As concerns the PRSP the bank (BWIs) should help countries address key analytical gaps about the poverty impact of policies and programs. Analysis should address areas such as sources of growth, the quality of strategies in other than the social sectors, and the integration of macro frameworks with structural and social reforms. This is a nutshell what constitutes the global view toward the alleviation of poverty. Specific PRSP are prepared after three years by LDCs as is the case of Cameroon for evaluation. It will be important for us to have a look of the major focal of the Cameroonian PRSP and where necessary input of religious bodies is necessary.

## **5.2. Major Targeted Sectors in Poverty Alleviation in Cameroon.**

The Cameroonian authorities since independence have engaged several economic programmes in the vision of ameliorating the living standards of her continuous growing population. These programmes have not up to date presented relative success in the alleviation of poverty. Poverty levels have stagnated around 40%, and there is widespread regional disparities with rural areas carrying the bulk of the country's poor people. The poverty level in Cameroon is not uniform as there exist area of very high poverty rate that go up to 50%. The irony in the situation is that Cameroon has strong potential to develop if it could build on its vast potential. These potentials includes several aspects like an important natural resources to ensure inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction<sup>1</sup>. The question we therefore ask ourselves is what is not in the proper place if after all of these potential Cameroon cannot succeed in their fight against poverty? Is it an issue of governance or inappropriate policies?

In the context of developing a new strategy towards poverty alleviation, Cameroonian authorities used the participatory approach in designing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/07/12/cameroon-creating-opportunities-for-inclusive-growth-and-poverty-reduction>

(PRSP) in April 2003 under the supervision of the BWIs. The PRSP was later revised in 2008 to meet the challenging world situation of the moment. The revising of this strategy resulted to the conception of the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP). This came to confirm the option of involving the people at the level of the grassroots using a participatory approach. The GESP is a long-term development vision supplemented with multi-year development programmes. The recommendation of this paper were formulated by the competent development authorities who took into account the Vision 2035 perspective and the adoption of a new financial regime in December 2007.

The GESP was prepared within a context of the rising world economic crisis marked by several issues like the rising cost of living at the domestic level, the international financial crisis, and the global food and energy crisis. It is the result of the empirical expression of an integrated framework of a medium-term sustainable human development for Cameroon and describes the country's progress towards achieving the MDGs and realising the vision. Consequently, it is presented several issue amongst which are: i) an integrated development framework; ii) a financial coherence framework; iii) a government action and external support coordination framework; iv) an advisory and consultation framework with civil society organisations, the private sector and development partners; v) a guide for analytical works to inform the management of development (Growth and employment strategy paper 2010/2020, 2009, 13).

We earlier made mention of the role the government plays in the alleviation of poverty. It is difficult in the world to see a government that single headedly handle alleviation of poverty. The government's role is to set up the atmosphere wherein sustainable development can be achieved. The Cameroon government has made its long term development vision on the 2035 emergence scale clear in the GESP. Several fields of the micro and macro field of actions have been noted. These include several area amongst which are: Infrastructural Development; Modernisation of the production mechanism; Human development; Regional integration and diversification of trade; Financing the economy (Growth and employment strategy paper 2010/2020, 2009, 17-22). All these great field of action needs a four scale participation. This is that of the government, population, partners and civil society with each playing different compactible roles.

This said, the locality of Kumba is a metropolitan town that has a combination of an urban area and a rural area. The implementation of these projects in Kumba cannot be single

handed handle by the central or local governments. They obviously have to make use of partner at the local level and at the international level. Religious bodies play a double role of participant and consultancy in development especially in the human development.

### **5.3. Determining the Role the Civil Society plays in poverty alleviation in Cameroon**

The term "civil society" is generally used to refer to social relations and organisations outside the state or governmental control. Sometimes it is also taken to mean outside the economic or business sphere as well. The "civil society" can refer to several bodies who are non-profit making like Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and associations that people belong to for social and political reasons: churches and church groups, community groups, youth groups, service organizations, interest groups, and academic institutions and organisations, for example<sup>1</sup>.

The Civil Society when organised is called Civil Society Organisation (CSO) and can take specific forms like NGOs, Faith Based Organisation (FBOs). The role of the religious bodies in the fight against poverty is tantamount under that of CSOs. The CSOs are acting partner in the society and play a double function of consultancy and participation.

Civil society and social movements in Cameroon is represented by a complexity of organisations. This is previewed by the legal instruments that governs their modes of creation, organisation, functioning as well as other details such as goals, and particularly, their sources of revenue. It is not that easy to structure CSO in Africa due to their complexity. In a bid to categorise CSO in Africa, Ekeh argues that care should be taken in adding associations and institutions who have not just a manifest but also a latent capacity to confront the state (Ekeh 1992). On this basis, he identifies four categories of civil society organisations in Africa: civic public associations, for example, trade unions, student unions, mass media; deviant civic associations, for example, secret societies and fundamentalist religious movements; primordial public associations, for example, ethnic associations; and indigenous development associations, for example, farmers and traditional women's unions.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ngopulse.org>

Cameroonian CSOs have come a long way rising from the ashes of the democracy struggle. The Cameroonian CSO has face several challenges with the passing of time. This process actually began with the country's independence in 1960. Their activities were drastically reduce from 1970 during the reign of the one party system. The CSO started to see brighter days when the country's leap into multiparty in the 1990s and the economic decline of the 1990s. They have an unquestionable presence today and there exits over 3000 organisations categorised under the not-for-profit umbrella working alongside Cameroonian public authorities, political parties, the private sector, technical and financial partners, and the international community at large and everywhere where global development challenges need local answers.

The government in a bid to reverse this trend poverty, subscribed to the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) prescribed by the Breton Wood Institutions as an alternative development paradigm to the state-centred approach. The BWIs had hitherto declared the state centred approach to development and poverty alleviation as outmoded and unrealistic (Tanga and Mbuagbo 2002). The new approach entailed the withdrawal of the state as a major player in the economy by the introduction of neo-liberal economic principles that lay emphasis on market forces as the engine for growth and development. It therefore require that the state democratises and make use of the civil society as an integral and active agent in the restructuring process of developement. It was widely believed by bank's policy makers that civil society could be the alternative route for Africa's development dilemma. Therefore, there was a need for the inclusion of the civil society in exercise and this became an important benchmark for continued economic assistance from the World Bank and other bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors.

Since 1990 Cameroon has devised a framework for NGOs and CSOs to operate legally. In theory, the provision permits NGOs and CSOs to be registered by the Government of Cameroon under the Law on Freedom of Association (Law N0 90/053 of 19 December 1990), the Law relating to Co-operative Societies or Common Initiative Groups (Law 92/006 of 14 August 1994), or both. Further extension of the framework was brought in 1999 through an NGO law was designed to grant access to public funding to NGOs only. This law stipulates the in article 2 that: "an NGO is a declared association or authorized foreign association in accordance with the law in force, accredited by administrative authorities to participate in execution of missions of general interest". These missions of general interest are operations in the following area of general interest: the legal, economic, social, cultural, health, sports,



educational, humanitarian, environmental protection and the promotion of human rights. This give large field of action to CSO and more precisely to religious bodies<sup>1</sup>.

Ingram and al., (2007) talk about the existence of about 19 legal NGOs in Cameroon from 1993 to date. In the South West and North West regions what Ingram and colleagues labelled Civil Society Organisations as a mix of: 15,468 Common Initiative Groups (CIGs), 1067 cooperatives, 238 CIG Unions, 50 Unions of Cooperatives, 22 Federations of CIGs, 3 Confederations and 125 Associations. There is an estimated 90% of CSOs registered are active in agriculture, livestock and forestry. Interestingly not more than 50% of these CSO's are probable active as some of them are suitcase CSOs with leaders who have no iota of civic responsibilities says (Wilfred A. Abia and al, 2016, 11).

Thus the Cameroonian CSOs have an effective involvement in the areas of education, health, agriculture, gender issue and the empowerment sectors among other. In the exercise of these roles, they are helping to sustain a vision of social justice fundamentally at the service of local livelihoods. Their primary objective is to render assistance to individuals of the developing communities in order to promote sustainable development at the grassroots level. This is by crucially organising the citizen's engagement in the vision of increasing the likelihood of Cameroon to broader Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). The obtainment of this is in line with the country's plans to achieve emergence by 2035 (Elomo Tsanga, 2013, 4). This is highly significant as poverty affects 40 per cent of the local population. The actions of religious bodies fall within this frame work.

#### **5.4. Engagement of Religious Bodies in Kumba in the Fight Against Poverty**

We had earlier demonstrated the fact that several religious bodies exist in Kumba along the lines of Christian, Islam and Traditional Religions. From the above analysis it came out clear that religious bodies are part of the civil society. They benefit from a legal framework which recognises them as partner of development. They also have the credibility of international in their action against poverty. Thereby making them active participant and partners in the fight against poverty. The presence of these religious bodies in Kumba significantly impact on poverty alleviation in the region. Their contribution to poverty

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/setting-up-non-governmental-organisation-cameroon-suiy-wirngo-esq->

alleviation can be seen from two angles which are on the spiritual part and on the pragmatic realisation of services.

The legacy of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba can be drawn from its conceptive role as well as its pragmatic presence. According to Jaco Bayers (2014, 4), religion plays three roles with reference to the debate on poverty. The role is that religion can redirect human attention to the extent of ultimate concern. This means helping to structure the human mind to the virtue of empathy as concerns the poor. Secondly, religion provides the ethical fibre to society in order to have an appropriate response to poverty. Lastly, it is the responsibility of religion to alleviate poverty by providing realisable solutions. Elaborating on the last he specifies that the role of religion when it comes to poverty can never be reduced to merely sympathy and well-wishing. This cannot also be limited to empty words of comfort by emphasising a better future still to come. The religious bodies need to add pragmatism to the moral value which they introduce in the society.

Based on the philosophies of the different religious backgrounds, the distribution of wealth is always previewed in different forms of charitable donations. That notwithstanding, religious bodies due to their credibility stand as good medium through which international donors can use to channel projects to poor communities (Jaco Bayers, 2014, 7). Religious bodies in this sense do not only act as media through which aid can be channelled, they also act as supervisors to the projects. It should not be taken off sight the fact that the BWIs have continuously recommended the opinion of the civil society, which religious bodies are part of, in the carrying out of poverty alleviation schemes. Remember religions do not only stand as reunifying factors but also as identical factors wherein their members identify themselves.

Looking at the case of Kumba, we are not going to get into the philosophy at the core of each religious body but we will stress on the various ways through which religious bodies fight poverty. In this light, we will be guided by human and financial aspects put in place by religious bodies in the vision to ameliorate the conditions of the people of Kumba. Our findings brought us to the following domains: Education; Health; Empowerment; Social Services; Agriculture; Employment.

### 5.4.1. Education

Education has always played an important role in the society. The importance of education is unquestionable. Education is building and nurturing the human capacity in a précised environment for a potential future. The role of education does not only stand at carrier building but also the conception of a potential mind for the society. The impact of education should be felt in the society with the realisation of its benefit to the society. Religious bodies in Cameroon as concerns education are operation under the logic of private educational bodies and more precisely under the logic of “confessional education”. It is the duty of the government to educate it population but they cannot manage this task alone. In this light the government prepare the rightful environment by setting the appropriate legislation. It was in line with this that Law No. 76-15 of July 1976 and recently modified by Law No 2004/022 of 22 July 2004 laying down the rules governing the organisation and functioning of private education in Cameroon.

We are not going to look at each detail of the legislature. Instead, we are going to situate the possible role religious bodies as private institutions have in the educative sector in Cameroon as a whole. Looking at the general provision, Private education shall be a social service provided by private partners in the public interest, through curricular or training activities conducted within schools or training establishments, as the case may be, with support from the State and regional and local authorities. Going further, they shall provide education through nursery, primary, general secondary, technical secondary, vocational and teacher training institutions. In this light, Private schools or training institutions shall pursue the same objectives as those of public schools or training establishments<sup>1</sup>.

This is geared towards the provision of civic, physical, moral, intellectual, vocational and technical training to young Cameroonians. In this respect, they shall implement the duly approved official or autonomous syllabuses and prepare the pupils and students for the corresponding certificate examinations. But as concerns the conferring of diplomas only the State may confer diplomas. However, for private schools or training establishments whose courses prepare students for official diplomas, the State shall ensure that quality and pedagogic standards are respected.

That said, ownership of private institutions are grouped into four organisations. Each of these organisations shall be endowed with a legal status and placed under the supervision of the Minister in charge of national education or the Minister in charge of technical education

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/7788487627d54a19fef0d1c06178330f43229ee7.pdf>

and vocational training, as the case may be. These organisations based on specificity shall be placed either under:

- The organisation of proprietors of private Catholic schools or training establishments;
- The organisation of proprietors of private Protestant schools or training establishments;
- The organisation of proprietors of private Islamic schools or training establishments;
- The organisation of proprietors of private lay schools or training establishments<sup>1</sup>.

From the above legal framework, religious bodies in the domain of education operate within a legitimacy determined and supervised by the states. The various religious bodies which the state has given the legitimacy to participate in educational endeavours include; The Catholics, Protestants and Islamic. It is based on this legitimacy that these bodies operate in the domain within their legal limits and consequently participate in the fight against poverty.

The next question we seek to answer in this part is why do religious bodies chose education as a means to fight against poverty? In other words, how can poverty contribute to the fight against poverty? Education does not only stand as a fundamental right but a purpose for sustainable development and the combat of poverty in the long term. Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon resumes the purpose of education in the following words, “Education is a fundamental right and the basis for progress in every country. Parents need information about health and nutrition if they are to give their children the start in life they deserve. Prosperous countries depend on skilled and educated workers. The challenges of conquering poverty, combatting climate change and achieving truly sustainable development in the coming decades compel us to work together. With partnership, leadership and wise investments in education, we can transform individual lives, national economies and our world”<sup>2</sup>. It is with this thinking that we base our argument of the importance of education on poverty alleviation.

This was an understanding already established by religious bodies in poverty alleviation. They have been partners in the education since the colonial especially in the English speaking region of Cameroon of which Kumba is part. They had earlier taken upon this role of educating the population with the assistance of the government in terms of

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/7788487627d54a19fef0d1c06178330f43229ee7.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Development Begins with Education: How education can contribute to the proposed post-2015 goals in <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002305/230508e.pdf>

subventions. Confessional schools had always given the best offer of quality education at cheaper rate. The cost of this education has increase with the progress of time because of the reduction of government subvention to private education since the economic crisis of the 1990s (R. Akoko Mbe, 2008, 73). But that notwithstanding, confessional school have still found schemes where poor families could access quality education from them.

Religious bodies have so far consumed the task of providing education to the society. Based on their faith, they add to their curricula syllabuses aspects of their religious faith. We recall here that an important role of religious bodies in the society is that of moral guidance and they belief strongly in it. They believe there will be no education if there is no morality in it. They therefore have the obligation of bringing up future people of Kumba in the fear of the Lord and in good morality. In this light, religious bodies have long played an important role in education in Kumba. Their legacy in the domain can be drawn from the colonial days during which the British allowed the educational domain to the management of religious bodies. In Kumba today confessional schools are second in number after state owned school. They offer primary to higher education.

Looking at the participation of religious bodies in the educational domain, they are involved in education in all levels. The RCC for example, holds a great number of schools in Kumba from the Primary to the secondary. They have many primary institutions generally carrying Saint Names. In the secondary domain RCC schools often carry Saint Names like Saint Francis, Saint Therese. The PCC in Kumba also has a wide range of primary school in the names of Presbyterian Primary Schools in different area as well as secondary and professional education. They have the first secondary in Kumba which is the Presbyterian High School (PHS) created in 1963. They also have a Theological Seminary for the training of pastors.

The CBC is an important participant in the field of Education. They have several primary schools in the name of Baptist primary school in different locations. They also have a secondary school in the name of Baptist High School (BHS). The Full Gospel Mission Cameroon (FGMC) also plays a role in education. They have from primary to secondary schools. Their primary school is called Full Gospel Primary and Nursery School (FUGOPAN) and their secondary school is called Full Gospel Secondary School (FUGOSEC). The Islamic corps is not left apart in the educational domain. They have a primary school known as the Islamic Primary School and a secondary school called Islamic Secondary School. All these schools are managed by organised educational secretariats for each religious body.

The fight against poverty in the educational domain by religious bodies is also on the moral domain. These confessional schools implement religion as part of their curricula so as to build a sustainable future for the people of Kumba. This is a long term measure to cut poverty by nurturing conscious citizen. The issue is confessional school are in the hands of private education whose cost can be questionable in Cameroon.

#### **5.4.2. Health**

The health domain in Cameroon remains one of the most important as concerns poverty alleviation. The need for the provision of a minimum health service remains a priority to the Cameroonian government as well as the civil society. Cameroon in the year 2009 had a ratio of 118 330 inhabitants per hospital. The health care system in Cameroon involves three sub-sectors notably:

- A sub-public sector constituted of; public hospitals and the health structures under guardianship of other department members (Departments of Defence, Department of Employment, Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of National Education).
- A sub-private non-profit sector (religious denominations, associations and various non-governmental organizations) and those for-profit.
- A sub-sector of the traditional medicine which is an important component to the system and that cannot be ignored<sup>1</sup>.

The organisation of the Cameroonian health system has been define in 1989 by the Ministry of Public Health by decree N<sup>o</sup> 98/011. This decree stipulates that the Ministry of Public Health stand to the designation and implementation of the health policy which turns around the following strategies:

- The elimination or reduction of a number of diseases (poliomyelitis, diphtheria, neonatal tetanus, measles, trachoma, malaria, Bilharzia);
- The improvement of vaccination coverage: 86.2% for BCG (vaccine against tuberculosis), 84.0% for DPT3 (vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough), 79.9% for VAR (anti measles vaccine), 81.9% for POLIO3 (vaccine against poliomyelitis), 76.3% for protected births against neonatal tetanus (TT2+) and 77.3% for the VAA (against yellow fever);
- The improvement of health care support and malaria prevention;

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<sup>1</sup> [www.medcamer.org](http://www.medcamer.org)

- The control of tuberculosis endemic and decentralizing its health care support, with its integration into the network of basic health cares;
- The improvement of the situation of transmittable ophthalmias especially those relating to trachoma;
- The generalisation of access and the free access to tritherapy for AIDS;
- The substitution of human insulin 40 units by human insulin 100 units to increase the security and quality care to diabetes patients<sup>1</sup>.

The above elaborated strategies of the health policy are to be ensured by the organisation, development and the technical control of the services of public and private health units. Just as in the educational domain, in the health domain the government hold the responsible to provide good health services to its population. But this cannot duty cannot be handled alone by the government. They obviously need the private participant and Non-profit making organisation to participate in the attainment of this objective. It was in this light that in Cameroon the bulk of non-profit facilities that were operated by the Catholic and Protestant Health Services. The former operate 179 facilities (including 8 hospitals) with a staff of 1,315 and the latter 122 health facilities (including 24 hospitals) with a staff of 2,633 in 1997 (Joseph Ntangsi, 1999, 3). The government assists these health service by granting them subventions to support the charges of the staff notably salaries and allowances.

The participation of religious bodies in the health domain in Kumba is not leaved indifferent. They are a serious partner in the health domain. The health services owned by religious bodies are generally appreciated by the public for the reliable and quality services they offer. Historically, they hold a certain legacy as concerns the setting up of and the provision of health services. Religious bodies and religious persons had not only help in the fight against epidemics but had also provided education on sanitary habits that could help fight against. Their early actions were purely charitable. This has drastically change now with the rising cost of health material. However, religious health services still operate as non-profit organisations and still offer practically affordable quality services.

Looking critically at the different religious bodies involve in health care, we noted the RCC, the PCC, the CBC and The Apostolic Church of Cameroon TACC. They offer different services like Clinical and Laboratory, General and Plastic Surgery, Maternal and Childcare (Paediatrics), a Pharmacy, a Nursing School and Staff and Administrative Services. They also

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.statistics-cameroon.org>

offer additional outpatient services like Family planning, Hypertension and Diabetes Clinic, Dental Clinic, HIV-AID clinic and free Vaccination and Tuberculosis Treatment. Out of twelve private health service centres, 6 are owned by religious bodies<sup>1</sup>.

The RCC contributes to two of the Health services in Kumba. They own the Saint John Bosco Health Centre and the Saint Francis Hospital where they have a partnership. The CBC has one integrated Health Centres which the public generally calls “Mbingo” under the supervision of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Service CBCHS. The PCC owns a hospital called the Presbyterian Medical Institution Mayemen. The TACC also owns a hospital called The Apostolic Hospital Banga-Bakundu.

The beneficiary issue about the services rendered by religious health service does not only depends on the cost. They have the opportunity to receive expertise volunteers who often come and render quality services to the population fees free. The role of religious bodies when it comes to the health domain is unquestionable. They are not only actors but stand as legitimate partner for sponsorship. This goes a long way to fight against poverty.

### **5.4.3. Empowerment**

The term empowerment refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities. The purpose is to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. This is a process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. Empowerment as action refers to both the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognise and use their resources<sup>2</sup>. Empowerment can involve several types like; gender empowerment, youth empowerment, community empowerment, economic empowerment, community empowerment and many other forms.

The operation of empowerment is done in two stages. The first stage gears at educating the concerned. Here the concerned is presented with the opportunities available. This makes the concern have awareness of the panoply of choices that are generally innate. This creates an awareness in the concern and thereafter opportunities are easily visible at

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<sup>1</sup> fahpcm.org/.../POPULATION\_AND\_DISTRIBUTION\_OF\_HEALTH\_FACILITIES

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.businessdictionary.com>



hand. The second stage is granting resources to the concern to emancipate on the opportunities. This involvements giving a small push forward our creating a good environment to nurture the choices of the concern. Gender empowerment and youth empowerment remains one of the main concern in the Cameroonian society today.

The gender problem or the quest for gender equality is not only a Cameroonian problem. This fight has always been at the core of gender questions which resides around the granting of equal opportunities to both parties. Women represent a majority of the world's population, but they often don't have the same opportunities as men to participate in economy and society. Many women face discrimination, lack of access to credit, and high illiteracy rate and therefore are often treated as second-class citizens. Despite this, women in Africa and in Cameroon in particular are responsible for their children and households. Giving women equal opportunities will not only allows them to achieve their full potential. This will creates a more productive society and improves the lives of their children. 3/4 of Cameroonian women live in rural areas and rely on subsistence agriculture<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, building the capacities of rural poor farming women is crucial to emancipating women in Cameroon. When these women come together they increase their strength for self and community development.

The Cameroonian government has created both legal forum and institutional forum to give a recognition to the plight of women. The Cameroonian constitution in several article protect the gender equality and grants equal opportunities to all of its citizens indistinctive of sex<sup>2</sup>. The reinforcement to women right is guaranteed by an entire ministry that takes care of women affaire in the country known as the Ministry of Women Empowerment. That notwithstanding the concern given to rural women because of their participation in the agrarian economy of Cameroon.

The call for concern on the need for gender empowerment in Cameroon emanate from the fact the cultural heritage of most societies in Cameroon which gave less front role importance to women in their ethos. Given the important role of women in the society today notable due to their importance in number and the direct role they play in the family and in the society, they stand as important partners to the alleviation of poverty. This is the reason why the empowerment of women stands as imperial for the alleviation of poverty. It is from

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.shumas-cameroon.org/women%20empowerment.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Portals/0/presentation/W%20L%20R%20in%20Cameroon.pdf>

this stand that religious bodies have come to understand of the important role women play in the society and how they could contribute to poverty alleviation.

Religious bodies in Kumba have designed different empowering programmes that will give a lot of importance to women. Through the actions of their Faith Based Organisations, they have design and put in place schemes that see into the empowerment of women at two fronts we had earlier talk about. This is in the education and financial. Talking about education, the objective of this is providing a knowledge base to women which will help their social inclusion. In this light, through their FBOs they provide educative programmes to women and young girls on the topics of hygiene, etiquette, kitchen craft, embroidery, housekeeping, marriage, citizenship and many more. Faith based organisations are credible and can get financial assistance their schooling and entrepreneurial. They also look at particular cases where girls cannot access education and give a support so that they can access.

Looking at critical examples as per practised in the zone of Kumba, religious bodies intervene at different levels often through faith based organisations. The RCC in Kumba through the Catholic Women Association (CWA) have designed several empowerment programmes geared towards empowering women. The CWA does not hold only the legacy of social education but also a forum through which women supportive finances are raised (Rita N. Manka'ase, 2013). This is similar for the Cameroon Baptist Convention Women's Union (CBWU) and the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF). The PCC even goes further with a special organ known as the Women's Education and Empowerment Programme (WEEP) which is in the Meme division of which Kumba is the head quarter. This association is in partnership with the Association of Meme Female Councillors (AMFCO). These organs commonly share the objective of the Educational empowerment of women and the Girl child, Gender awareness for men, Sexuality education for youths, Entrepreneurship and Governance.

The effect of the participation of religious bodies in women empowerment has led to several positive effects. Women in Kumba through the forum of religious bodies have received practical information that have helped in the creation their awareness to their opportunities and other issue in practical life. Through religious forums, women have easily regrouped themselves into common initiative groups where they could be easily founded for projects. These actions do not work only towards the empowerment of women but has boiled

down towards the alleviation of poverty. This by looking at the particular situation of Kumba that has an agrarian economy.

#### **5.4.4. Agriculture**

Agriculture is an important factor in the fight against poverty which cannot be sidelined. Agriculture remains the backbone of Cameroon's economy, employing 70 % of its workforce, while providing 42% of its GDP and 30% of its export revenue. The principal cash crops are cotton, coffee. These products had accounted for 16.7% of the country's exports in 1987, and cacao production had met this level. The country also relies on its main subsistence crops are such as roots, tubers, plantain, millet and sorghum. Livestock farming is also important to the food supply. The country was generally self-sufficient in food. Until recently, research and financial assistance have been directed to the export cash crop sector at the expense of subsistence food production. The fall in the price of raw materials on the world market has negatively affected the economy and the agricultural sector in particular<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, the country's current agricultural policy includes increased food production, revitalisation and protection of markets, and the development of improved food processing and storage.

The role of agriculture in Kumba is unquestionable. More than 85% of the population of Kumba depend on agriculture and the area remains one of the greatest exporters of cocoa in Cameroon. This situation has been depreciative since the economic crisis of the 1980s. Kumba, like Cameroon as a whole was sparked by the economic crises of 1986 characterized by the fall of price of primary products. This led to a reduction of agricultural productivity with the closure of the then marketing board and the farmers bank (Agbor Samuel Ewang, 2016, 1). This situation has been deplorable to the economy of Kumba and also to the lifestyle of the people there. Consequently, leading to a high wave of poverty which motivated a rise in the crime rate.

However, the recent economic atmosphere has been positive with the rise of the prices of cash crops and also with the efforts made by the Cameroonian government in the zeal to diversify agriculture in the region and not to solely rely on cash crops. In this perspective, more importance has been given to other products of subsistence like cassava and maize and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/V9319e/v9319e.htm>

not only rely on export oriented crops. The conception of this new agricultural policy was to be in the vision of third generation agriculture where these products will be industrialised. It is in this perspective that religious bodies with their social contract see in agriculture a new opening to the fight against poverty. The vision of involvement is perceived from two angles notably: providing a means of subsistence to families and providing products of basic necessity to the population at a cheaper rate.

From our findings we noticed that the participation of religious bodies are in several folds. Firstly, religious bodies are involved in the creation of agricultural project where they encourage the participation of their parishioner. The second phase of participation in agriculture involves the empowerment of local farmer with the provision of capital be it financial or material. The third level involves the marketing of agricultural products. The religious bodies generally involves in agriculture in Kumba are the RCC, the PCC, the CBC and the FGMC.

The RCC is involved in the three phases. The RCC is involved in both plant and animal husbandry. Their farms are a large source of employment to their parishioners. The produce of their farm take a manner of social repartition. This is done in such a way that some goes to the social vulnerable, some is used in the management of the parish, the other is offer to the participants and some goes to the bishop's house. The RCC also markets its farm produces at cheaper rate to the general public.

Religious bodies also participate in agriculture through empowerment. They either provide land or funds which can be exploited by their parishioner. The RCC has the most established land surface in Kumba and often provides it to parishioner for cultivation. The parishioner in return provides 10% of the produce to the parish and owns the rest. This measure is also similar to that of the PCC. The FGMC and CBC in Kumba are more involve in financial empowerment of their parishioners. They have respectively created the Zion Financing Credit and the Mutual Guarantee Financing Company which are microfinance establishment. These establishments provide credits to their parishioner and the general public for investment and other projects. The role of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba cannot be with complete without talking about the role in the provision of employment to the population.

### 5.4.5. Employment

The term employment does not simply denote the situation where someone is holding a job for which a wage is paid, or the operating of one's own business. This signifies beyond that. It signifies the state of anyone who is doing what, under the circumstances, he most wants to do. Such a person is fully employed. There exist several forms of employment amongst which are: regular, short term temporary, long term temporary and seasonal<sup>1</sup>. Whatever the type of employment there are two important aspects in it which turn around the effective remuneration and the satisfaction incurred in doing the job. These can have a direct or indirect effect on poverty.

Employment, and the quality of employment, decent work, is crucial for poverty reduction and in achieving growth with equity and pro-poor growth. The link between economic growth, employment and poverty reduction is thus a process in which output growth induces an increase in productive and remunerative employment, which, in turn, leads to an increase in the incomes of the poor and a reduction in poverty (Christophe Ernst and Janine M. Berg, 2009, 41). Thus, ensuring that growth is pro-poor requires high employment-intensity of growth and a rise in productivity which also depend on institutions, policies, laws and practices that positively affect the functioning of labour markets. This obviously passes through the formal and informal employment.

Employment is arguably the most important channel through which poverty in Africa at large and in Cameroon will be defeated. Whether members of the household in Cameroon are wage earners or self-employed, they earn a living from the fruit of their labour. In many circumstances, particularly in rural Africa where poverty is concentrated, labour, which is often unskilled is the only asset held by the poor. Employment income has several advantages over the other forms of assistance to the poor such as food aid, financial and in-kind assistance. Employment income is more reliable because it depends on the decision of the poor to work where employment is available. Secondly, employment income preserves the dignity of the poor as it pays for his effort. Thirdly, employment income helps the poor to be independent allowing him to meet his family's expectations in terms of providing for their livelihoods.

Religious bodies in Cameroon are part of the private sector which are generally termed non-profit making. The Public-Private Partnership obviously recognises the indispensable role

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.asu.edu/hr/documents/employee\\_definitions\\_benefits\\_eligibility.pdf](https://www.asu.edu/hr/documents/employee_definitions_benefits_eligibility.pdf)

played by religious bodies in different economic and social sectors. Religious bodies in Kumba carryout several activities which can be termed either profit making or non-profit making. Their ventures are seen in several domains such as education, health, finance and even agriculture. They are involved both in the formal and informal sector of employment. From the above analysis we made clear the participation of religious bodies in different economic sector. These sectors employ a large number of people formally and informally of which we could not have any statistics. These personnel are need for the smooth functioning of their different ventures.

This is the case in the educational services which does not only provides employment to teacher but also employs several people who act as administrative support staffs. This is a similar situation with the health sector which does not only employ the health service personnel but several persons who act as support staffs. All the activities which we enumerate in the above analysis in which the religious bodies participate are sectors of employment creation. Their provide employment in all the forms of regular, short or long term temporal and seasonal. We are even tempted in Cameroon after the government, religious bodies are the second greatest employers in the privates sector.

In a conclusive term, it is important to recall that from our findings, the fight against poverty is an important Millennium Development Goal (MDG) which involves global strategies to combat it. Cameroon as third world country, faces this major challenges of poverty alleviation with a poverty rate of about 40%. In this struggle, the Cameroonian government will need developmental partners of which one of them is the private sector. Religious bodies benefit from a legal coverage which makes considers them as non-profit making bodies acting in the social domain. This legal consideration gives them a certain legitimacy which makes them potential developmental partner through whom aids can be channel. In this light they participate actively in the process of development by materialising several projects in the domain socio-economic domains. In the uncovering of these project they bring a certain satisfaction to the poor and by so doing help in the combat against poverty. However, the next questioning we ask ourselves is to know how effective are religious bodies in the problem of poverty alleviation?

## **CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY RELIGIOUS BODIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY IN KUMBA**

In the previous chapter we analysed the different legacy and legitimacy in which religious bodies acted in their mission in the fight against poverty. We have shown their participation in the various socio-economic domains where they have proven to fight against poverty. From another angle, a rather critical analysis should be made with reference to this role due to the various strength, weakness, opportunities and treats. In this chapter we are looking from a critical angle the engagement of religious bodies in the fight against poverty. In this light we are going to use the SWOT analysis to determine the role of religious bodies in their involvement in poverty alleviation.

### **6.1. Strengths of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba**

Religious bodies in Kumba are an enormous potentiality which obvious stand to their advantage as compare to other social partner in Kumba. Their advantages come from the various strength they have in the domains of the fight against poverty. Amongst their strength in Kumba is their large number of subscriber, the religiosity of the message propagated and their historical presence. Their strength in the domain of poverty alleviation is analysed in the following paragraphs

#### **6.1.1. Historical**

Historically in Kumba, religious bodies have a legacy in developmental project. Just a recall, Kumba draws her historical heritage from the British Mandate and Trusteeship from 1922 to 1961. From our above analysis in chapter three we saw how the early implantation of Christian missionaries in the region took place. The Basel Mission became the first religious body in the region. This premium implantation in the region made the Basel Mission pioneer to development and they began several social projects besides the opening of churches. It was in this vision that they open school with the objective of educating the local population, opened hospitals to fight against local diseases like malaria and opened farms where they demonstrated modern farming technics to the people which were more efficient (<http://www.bmarchives.org>).

In this part of Cameroon, religious bodies were advantaged by the British reign of indirect rule which gave religious bodies certain autonomy in the management of social affairs. The British government placed in policies that favoured the activities of religious bodies. These works have been continued by other religious bodies that saw this as their social engagement. In this light, religious bodies in Kumba hold the oldest private establishment in the religious, educational, health and agricultural domains. The other aspect making their strength beside the historical factor is the popularity they attract. Religious bodies in this sense had an earlier establishment which had created a certain popularity amongst the population. But their historic aspect does not solely contribute to the strength of the religious bodies, their popularity also counts.

### **6.1.2. Popularity**

Kumba is considered one of the most religious towns of Cameroon and the home of Pentecostalism (R. Akoko Mbe, 2002, 365). Carrying out a discussion in Kumba one will notice that everyone in Kumba confesses a religious practise. The largest composition of religious body in Kumba is the Christians who form about 85% of the population<sup>1</sup>. The remaining 15% is composed of 10% Muslims and 5% practising traditional religions. Religion stands to be a regrouping factor in which everyone is involved in one way or the other.

Christianity in Kumba holds certain notoriety amongst the population. People are easily mobilised through different Christian churches. This is similar with Muslims which are easily mobilised via their mosque. The popularity of religion amongst the people of Kumba has created a new phenomenon of identity based on religious identity. The popularity of the religious factor has made the BWIs to recommend the use of religious bodies in the poverty alleviation programmes in two ways. Firstly, as a consultative body and also a legitimate medium through which aid programmes can be conducted. Added to the popularity of the religious bodies is the message they transmit.

### **6.1.3. Messages carried out as concerns poverty**

The legitimacy of religious bodies in the fight against poverty is based in the philosophy transmitted in their different messages concerning poverty and the fight against poverty. We had already done an apology of the different philosophies and their engagement

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<sup>1</sup>joshuaproject.net



as concern the topic in chapter four. Just as a recall, all the religious bodies in Kumba are of the opinion that poverty is vice in the society and need to be out ridden. In these sense they hold different mean of fight which ranges from simple charity to empowerment of the concerned.

Also important as concerns their legitimacy in poverty alleviation is the religiosity of their message and method which provide a non-corrupt medium. Religious bodies nowadays give certain certitude to partner who will like to take action against poverty. This is because of the value of empathy that is supposedly practised by them. This gives donors certain certitude to be acting via the right medium. That notwithstanding, religious bodies embed weakness which sometimes does not proves their legitimacy in the fight against poverty making their weakness.

## **6.2. Weakness of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba**

It is true religious bodies are a general assert to the fight against poverty in the world wide and especially in Kumba but that notwithstanding, they also harbour several witness that can make their engagement problematic. These weaknesses include the diversity in the religious bodies, conflicting ideas transmitted by the different religious groups, the lack of good faith by the religious bodies and the cost expense of their offers amongst others.

### **6.2.1. Diversity in religious bodies**

Religious diversity can be appreciated in the context where there is coexistence and tolerance. But religious diversity can be a conflicting factor where the different factions do not have mutual respect for other philosophy. Kumba has a great deal of religious diversity. Though we notice only three religious mainstreams notably Christianity, Islam and traditional religion there is further division within the above. The Christian are in Kumba are further divided into the Roman Catholics, Protestants and a large flow of Pentecostals. This make it in such a way that there is generally conflicting flow of interest amongst them when each wants to make its way known. Each religious body believes their philosophy is better than the other. A critical example of this is in the educational and health sector where each religious body thinks offering the best services. And this may lead to negative competition which is not working to the advantage of the poor people.

### **6.2.2. Conflict in the ideology**

In a continuum with the idea of diversity religious bodies also emanates the idea of conflict in the ideology propagated by the different religious bodies. Taking a critical example of the Christian domain, diversity has introduced conflict. Kumba first saw the presence of Protestant and the Roman Catholic which are called mainstream churches by Robert Mbe Akoko (2002, 364). These mainstream churches do not welcome the ideology of new Pentecostals churches and treat them of “commercial Nigerian preacher” and by so doing discourage their members from going there. The new protestant churches on their part preach specific ideas and discourage collaboration with other churches. They even discourage intermarriages with those from different church as well secular life. This is not a contributing factor to the fight against poverty.

### **6.2.3. Bad faith of Religious bodies**

Religious bodies themselves do not pose as problems in poverty alleviation but the bad faith of their religious authorities is often questionable. Kumba stand as a gateway to new Pentecostals churches due to her proximity with Nigeria. Just as described above “commercial Nigerian preacher” their activities are often questionable. The leaders of the churches make quick money out of the innocence and ignorance of the people who continue to lavish in poverty. They promise unrealisable prosperity and benefit from the small means of the people and offer themselves the best saying men of good are to have the best. Their motto is “give more so that your blessing will be uncountable” or “sow your seed”. A good number of fake Pentecostal missionaries from Nigeria have been arrested in Cameroon for involvement in criminal activities, pushing the government to place stringent controls on their activities (R. Akoko Mbe, 2002, 365).

### **6.2.4. Difficult access to their projects due to cost**

Looking critically at the health and the educational domain, the offers of establishment owned by religious bodies is generally cost expensive. No schooling fee is required for government primary school. Parents just have to provide the schooling material for their children. This is not the case in confessional school where a fees often above 10000 FCFA beside other schooling material. This can be cost expensive for poor parent. Even though they

have tried to fight against this like RCC in Kumba has tried to cut with granting scholarships to children whose parents work in their farm.

This is similar also with the health facilities. The reason for this cost expensiveness arises from the fact that the government facilities are subsidised unlike the private ones which the confessional facilities are part. The cost of these facilities rose since Cameroon was knocked by the economic crisis of the 1990s which saw the rise of the cost of medical equipment and the cut of government subventions to private school (R. Akoko Mbe, 2008, 73). This situation is a weakness is a handicap to religious bodies in the fight against poverty. That notwithstanding they have opportunities to explore.

### **6.3. Opportunities to be exploited by religious bodies in poverty alleviation**

Religious bodies have several opportunities that are open to them with the fight against poverty. Religious bodies in Cameroon just as in Kumba operate within a certain legal framework which make based on the constitution and supervised by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation. Religious bodies have several opportunities within which they operate in the fight against poverty amongst which are a degree of non-taxability in their ventures, a wide scope of operation and the recognition of international organisations as medium of development.

#### **6.3.1. A good legal atmosphere for operation**

The Cameroon legislation guarantees freedom of worship and religious under the specific jurisdiction of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation<sup>1</sup>. Religious bodies benefit from an added advantage as the activities they run such as schools, health services and social services like orphanages, special need centres and event agricultural ventures are not submitted to any form of taxation by the Cameroonian fiscal legislature (Law No. 2009/019 of 15 December 2009 on Local Fiscal System). The Cameroonian legislatures on such issue are good opportunities of operation that religious bodies should and obviously benefit from. This legal framework guarantees a smooth functioning of religious bodies' endeavours in the fight against poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.state.gov/documents/organization/171604.pdf](http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171604.pdf)

### **6.3.2. Large field of action to be exploited**

Religious bodies have a large field of action that they can explore in their mission of poverty alleviation in Kumba. The rate of poverty in Cameroon is estimated at 40% and that of Kumba is 33%<sup>1</sup>. The fight against poverty recommends several action plans which can be exploited by religious bodies. The recognition of religious bodies as potential civil society actors gives them two roles: consultative and participative. Religious bodies have opportunity of a large field in which they can act as social actors, political actors and economic actors with accorded advantage of a bias legislature that favour them. Added to this opportunity is the recognition they have with international donors.

### **6.3.3. Recognition of their Role by the Britton Woods Institutions**

The BWIs composed of the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development had prepared the SAP and PRS for Less Economically Development countries in the means to cut down the rising economic crisis and increasing poverty rate they faced from the 1990s. The first generation of the PRS had fail and the analysis of the BWIs showed that the PRS solely depended on the government which were not often credible. The BWIs recommended the inclusion of the civil society in the new PRS and the civil society plays a double role of consultancy and participation (World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, 2004, 15).

Religious bodies are part of the civil society. They have been credible in their involvement in poverty alleviation. The BWIs institutions recognise them as potential and credible partner in the fight against poverty. This credibility has influenced the participation of donors to religious bodies in the fight against poverty. This stands as an exploitable opportunity to be used by religious bodies to foster their contribution in the fight against poverty even though they face challenges in their endeavours

## **6.4. Treats faced by Religious Bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba**

Religious bodies in Kumba in their zeal to fight against poverty faced certain treats which can possibly make their endeavours less effective. Religious bodies in this light have to deal with the attitude of the people, the opposition from the government, the rising influence of secular civil society actors and the economic factor amongst others.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?c=cm&v=69](http://www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?c=cm&v=69)

#### **6.4.1. The attitude of the people**

The society of Kumba is a heterogeneous one composed of people of different origin notably: the Bafaws and the Bakundus who are the indigenes of the area; and a series of stranger made up of the North Westerner, Bamileke and Nigerians who have are almost overshadowing the indigenes. Just to recall, we had made an appreciation of the people of Kumba in chapter 2. This heterogeneous population constitute often share as common ground these use of the Pidgin language. But it should be noted that their cultural differences have built a certain mind set which often poses as a hindrance to the activities of religious bodies.

These different people often due their culture have a preference attached preference to certain religious trend and will only in case of desperation take a solution from the other. Critical example of these is when a catholic Christian will not allow his children to attend a Presbyterian school for fear of converting the children to Presbyterians. The population is still under the influence of remaining under the influence of their religious confessions and staying to their canons. This attitude stands as a treat to religious bodies in their mission on the fight against poverty.

#### **6.4.2. Set back from the state administration**

The above arguments have shown that the mission of religious bodies in Cameroon in general and specifically in Kumba is not only limited to spiritual affair. Religious bodies cannot close their eyes on issues of poverty, corruption and bad governance faced by the people in their different constituencies. It is true the Cameroonian legislature guarantee the right to religious freedom and provides a good legal forum for religious bodies to carry out their different social and economic ventures. However, there are always situations where religious bodies clash with the administration with the carrying out of their social mission.

It should be recall that religious bodies as member of the civil society and by so doing have the function to denounce vices of the society like corruption and marginalisation which are not good for the fight against poverty. Religious bodies in the English speaking regions of Cameroon, especially the RCC has often denounced the marginalisation of this part of the country (Charles Manga Fombad, 2013, 8). Such situations are not deemed pleasant the administration and can be particular with some administrative authorities. The administration also poses as a threat to religious bodies with the lengthy procedure in considering the applications of some religious bodies.

### **6.4.3. The rising influence of secular civil society organisation**

Religious bodies were the first in the terrain to take charge of the social domain by providing social facilities in Cameroon (Abwa Daniel, 2010, 41). This duty was gradually relieve of by the Cameroonian administration. This was the same in the domain of the fight against poverty religious bodies had succeeded in establishing themselves at the frontline. This front line position was due to their early presence coupled with administrative efforts. However, this frontline position is threatened today because of the arrival of other non-religious CSO who are gradually gaining grounds (Ingram and al, 2007). The influence of these CSO may complement the action of the religious bodies but may also gain the confidence of the population at the detriment of the religious CSO.

### **6.4.4. The economic factor**

The economic factor here we are referring to the economic atmosphere within which the religious bodies have to operate. Talking about the economic atmosphere, since the 1990s the Cameroonian economy enter a period of recession. In zeal to cut the economic crisis, was forced to join the SAP of the BWIs. This programme imposed measures such as devaluation of the currency, reduction of state expenditure amongst others so as to cut the economic crisis (R. Akoko Mbe, 2008, 73). These measures had far reaching on the religious bodies as the government reduce the subvention it gave to their schools. The prices of imports also increase and this had an adverse effect on the efficiency of religious bodies in the fight against poverty.

Sector of religious bodies who depend on government subvention and on imports were now forced to increase prices for their services. It was in this light that confessional education became costly, confessional health services also become costly. Following the same logic, their employment service was also affect. They were now forced to reduce the salaries of their workers as well as reduce their employment rate. This was clear exhibit that a negative economic environment affects or threatens the role of religious bodies in the fight against poverty.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: GENERAL CONCLUSION

### 7.1. Conclusion

Religion is a system of social coherence commonly understood as a group of beliefs or attitudes concerning an object, person, unseen or imaginary being, or system of thought considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine or highest truth, and the moral codes, practices, values, institutions, and rituals associated with such belief or system of thought (O. Ajaegbu 2012). Religion has a dual functionality which is the spiritual and the physical. Religious bodies are put in place in order to see through dual functionality of religious. The fight against poverty is one of physical functionality of religious bodies.

Until recently, the role of religion in local and international development policies have either been ignored or marginalised. Practice and research have leaved large areas poorly understood. Several like the provision of social services by religious bodies, the influence of religion in individual' value systems and the religious roots of social tension were not accorded importance. Many development agencies in the past will avoided the issue of faith and religion and their possible role in development. The secular vision of development was predominant. Development agencies were heavily influenced by a Western tradition that draws a sharp distinction between religion and the state. There was a deep reluctance to be associated with any form of proselytising and this was principally because of the fear of favouring one faith tradition over another.

This estrangement however was far from one-sided. Faith leaders typically saw themselves as the defenders of traditional moral values amid the onslaught of a secular and materialistic world. With greater understanding of the role of faith in development, there has been a significant change in attitudes and perceptions: with a move from estrangement to engagement. Since 2000, the World Bank's "Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics" unit has worked on improving understanding of faith, ethics, and service delivery (Marshall and Keough, 2004). Many development agencies, such as DANIDA, NORAD, SIDA and DFID have formed partnerships with faith communities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals amongst which poverty alleviation (Severine and Rakodi). Religious bodies in this sense are no longer considered provider of faith and its acolytes but a civil society organisation and development partner through which poverty can be alleviated. This is due to proximity religious bodies have with the population.

In our research our main question was: What is the contribution of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba? In addition to the research question, were the following questions: What are the different religious groups in Kumba? What are the engagements of these religious groups? What is their notion of poverty? What are the actions undertaken by the religious groups in the fight against poverty? What appreciation is made of the religious bodies in their engagement against poverty?

In order to provide answers to the above questions we chose the case study designed framework for the collection of our data and analysis. We chose principally the Christian and Islamic religious bodies of the town of Kumba: Cameroon. Our research consisted of database or literature and qualitative method. We examined what the other writer had written in connection to the potential role religious bodies had in the fight against poverty at a global perspective and in Kumba in particular. These helped us in the understanding of the concepts of poverty alleviation and also enabled us to refine and reformulate our research questions.

Furthermore, they provided the theoretical framework for my analytical discussion. With regard to the qualitative research method, we conducted empirical studies as a strategy of collecting data. Two main research tools were employed, namely, participant observation and interviews (semi-structured and the unstructured interview types). After having collected data through these techniques, we assessed, evaluated and analysed my findings in the light of my research questions, development theories, and some of the issues highlighted in the literature research.

The present study has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction which features three essential sections that I have already talked about in the above paragraphs: the motivation, research questions, and research design and method. Also important in chapter one is the analysis of concept. It ended with the thesis layout and chapter summary.

Chapter two provides the context of the study by mapping out its geographical location and the sociology of the area. Our work was carried out in the locality of Kumba which is situated in the Ndian division of the South West Region of Cameroon which has a rich history. We presented the heterogeneous nature of its population composed of indigenes and a fast growing stranger population. This heterogeneous nature of its population is at the origin of its multi-cultural of which religion is amongst.



The aim of chapter three was geared towards presenting the various religious bodies present in Kumba and the state of poverty in Kumba. The objective here was to give an exquisite of the religious picture of Kumba which show a picture domination of Christian religious bodies in a lesser minority of the Islamic and the traditional religion bodies. We also demonstrate the fact that poverty in Kumba draws its origin from the people's attitude coupled with the historic and the administrative factor. This was to have an understanding of the root cause of poverty in the region so as to know how to tackle it.

It is in continuum with the root cause of poverty in Kumba that in chapter four we seek to see the different perceptions of the different religious bodies as concerns poverty and poverty alleviation. The intention here was to know how these religious regard poverty and how they are supposed to fight against it. Following the same logic, we analysed the various ways through which poverty could be combated. This brought us to the mind-set that long lasting solution to poverty needed more inclusive action with the participation of every component of the society.

Chapter five carried the main issue of our research which is the empirical. We brought clear the global perception of on poverty alleviation so that we could outline the major targeted sectors to view in Cameroon. After painting a global image of poverty alleviation we now determined the place of religious bodies who are possible civil society actor in the fight. This established, we now looked at the different engagement taken up by the religious bodies in the domains of education, health, empowerment, agriculture and employment in the fight against poverty. Judging on this we it was essential to assess the strength and challenges religious bodies had in the fight against poverty in Kumba.

This summarises our chapter six which is geared carrying out an assessment of religious bodies in the fight against poverty. We made use of the SWOT analysis to check out the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of religious bodies in poverty alleviation in Kumba. Our humble observation was that in spite of the historical and faith centre which brought religious bodies closer to the population making them have legitimacy in poverty alleviation, religious bodies still has weaknesses like financial in their endeavours. That notwithstanding they had opportunities like the recognition they get from the BWIs.

## **7.2. Answer to Research question and sub questions**

The aim of our study was to answer our main question and sub-questions, in order words, to find out the role of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba; knowing the different religious bodies in Kumba, knowing their participation as concerns poverty alleviation? The method of data collection we used in this study is the qualitative which helped us in answering the questions. According to our findings religious bodies are relevant actors in the field of poverty alleviation in Kumba. Their legitimacy in the field can be drawn back in history where they were the first to provide for social services like education and health. The legitimacy also comes from their closeness to the people and the religious message they spread. That notwithstanding the challenges they face even with the opportunities they have.

Our main research question was what is the role of religious bodies in the fight against poverty in Kumba? In order to bring elements of answer to this question we did a qualitative research. This made us to apprehend the different notion that was our focus notably the notion of poverty, poverty alleviation, religion and religious bodies. Poverty cannot be limited to the lack of income for the provision of fundamental needs but it is also the lack of means or capacity to participate effectively in the society (United Nations 1998). Religion proofs the awareness of the transcendence practised in different ways which lead to different religious bodies (Sundermeier, 1999, 17). Religious bodies have a social mission which is guaranteeing a good livelihood of essential to the society. It is in the field of their social duty that the religious bodies in Kumba have mobilised their efforts to provision of the necessary social service to the people of Kumba and by so doing are fighting against poverty.

Religious bodies in Kumba in spite of the challenges they face from the difficult economic situation that is getting worse, they have put in place potential issue towards the fight against poverty. Religious bodies in Kumba have taken the following measures geared towards poverty alleviation:

- Education of the people in both the formal where an accented is given to vocational training and informal education.
- Health care in which they provide essential quality health care at the reach of the local population and vital services as concerns pandemic and epidemic with the partnership of international donors.

- Empowerment is also made a priority to them with a preference to women and youths in the vision of participative development.
- Involved in agriculture through which they supply foods stuff of basic necessity to the local population at cheap prices while taking also training and employing them to modern agricultural technic.

Religious bodies via the above measures have enormously contributed to the fight against poverty in the town of Kumba. It was evident from our finding that religious bodies through the above measure play a positive role in the fight against poverty. However, they still have challenges which they face from within their and from their environment. In the course answering our main research question we brought out answers to our sub-questions which were to know the different religious bodies present in Kumba, their philosophy of engagement of in poverty alleviation and what appreciation could be made of their engagement in poverty alleviation?

Looking at the different religious bodies involved in the Kumba, we noted the Christian body as the largest made up of the RCC, the Protestant (the PCC and the CBC) and Pentecostants (having a multitude of churches but the FGMC and TACC are the most established). In appreciating their engagement, we notice they are welcomed by the population in their venture because of the faith based factor but they face challenges in pursuing their mission principally because of the poor economic climate within which they operate. Religious bodies have the opportunity to pursue in this domain because of the possible contributions they form international partner and the still high rate of poverty which is still preponderant in Kumba.

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